THE PIKE'S PEAK RUSH

or TERRY IN THE NEW GOLD FIELDS

EDWIN·L·SABIN

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1919

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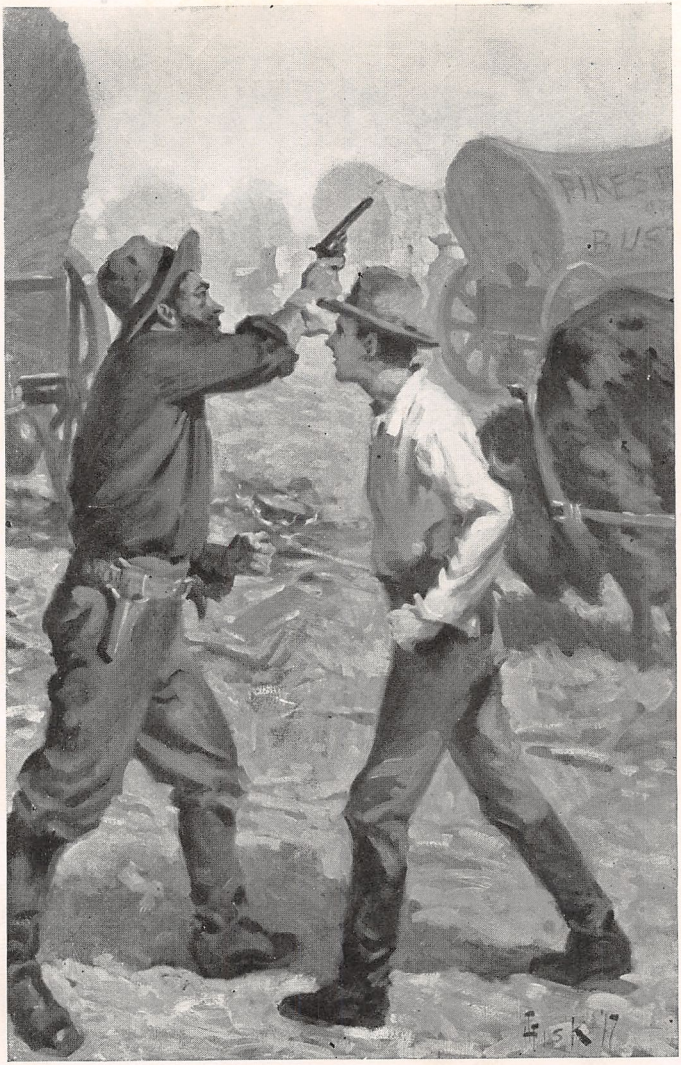

"NONE OF THAT, MR. IKE CHUBBERS!" REPEATED HARRY, STOUTLY FORCING THE MUZZLE UPWARD

THE GREAT PIKE'S PEAK RUSH

OR

TERRY IN THE NEW GOLD FIELDS

BY
EDWIN L. SABIN

"These mountains are supposed to contain minerals, precious stones and gold and silver ore. It is but late that they have taken the name Rocky Mountains; by all the old travelers they are called the Shining Mountains, from an infinite number of crystal stones of an amazing size, with which they are covered, and which, when the sun shines full upon them, sparkle so as to be seen at a great distance."

—From a Geography One Hundred Years Ago.

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TRAIL AND DIGGIN'S PEOPLE

OLD ACQUAINTANCES:

TERRY RICHARDS.....Off to the Gold Fields
MR. AND MRS. RICHARDS..... His Parents
HARRY REVERE.....His Partner
GEORGE STANTON.....A Tender-foot
VIRGIE STANTON.....Also a Tender-foot
MR. AND MRS. STANTON.....Their Parents
SOL JUDY.....A "Forty-niner"
PINE KNOT IKE.....Not so Tough After All
THUNDER HORSE.....Bad Medicine
SHEP.....Ready for Anything
DUKE THE HALF-BUFFALO, JENNY THE YELLOW MULE } ..Queer Wagon Mates

NEW ACQUAINTANCES:

THE SICK BOY.....Who Shows His Gratitude
PAT CASEY.....With a Taste for Pie
LITTLE RAVEN.....White Man's Friend
LEFT HAND.....Official Interpreter
HORACE GREELEY.....New York Tribune Editor
JOURNALIST RICHARDSON...Boston Journal Reporter
JOURNALIST VILLARD.....The Cincinnati Reporter
GREEN RUSSELL, JOHN GREGORY } .....The Original "Boomers"
McGREW THE WHEEL-BARROW MAN
Who "Pushed" Across
And Certain Others of the Busy Folk That Thronged the Gulches and the Young Denver City.

PLACE AND TIME: The Pike's Peak Country of the Rocky Mountains, 1859.

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THE GREAT PIKE'S PEAK RUSH

CHAPTER I

TO THE MOUNTAINS OF GOLD

"TWENTY-FIVE thousand people—and more on the way! Think of that!" exclaimed Mr. Richards, Terry's father.

It was an evening in early April, 1859, and spring had come to the Richards ranch, up the Valley of the Big Blue, Kansas Territory. Excitement had come, too, for Harry (Harry Revere, that is, the clever, boyish Virginia school-teacher who was a regular member of the family) had been down to the town of Manhattan, south on the Kansas River and the emigrant trail there, and had brought back some Kansas City and St. Louis papers. They were brimming with the news of a tremendous throng of gold-seekers swarming to cross the plains for the new gold fields, discovered only last year, in the Pike's Peak country of the Rocky Mountains.

"Do you suppose it's true, Ralph? So many?" appealed Mrs. Richards, doubting.

"Whew!" gasped Terry—the third man in the family. At least, he worked as hard as any man.

"I believe it," asserted Harry. "Manhattan's jammed and the trail in both directions is a sight!"

"So are Kansas City and Leavenworth, according to the dispatches," laughed Terry's father. "People from the east are flocking across Iowa, to the Missouri River, and the steamboats up from St. Louis are loaded to the guards—everybody bound for the Pike's Peak country and the Cherry Creek diggin's there. It beats the California rush of Forty-nine and Fifty."

"But twenty-five thousand, Ralph!" Mother Richards protested.

"Yes, and the papers say there'll be a hundred thousand before summer's over."

"Oh, Pa! Can't we go?" pleaded Terry.

"And quit the ranch?"

"But if we don't go now all the gold will be found."

"I think it would be sinful to leave this good ranch and go clear out there, with nothing certain," voiced his mother, anxiously. "You know it almost killed your father. He'd never have got home, if it hadn't been for you."

"That was when he was coming back, and we wouldn't need to come back," argued Terry. "And he fetched some gold, too, didn't he?"

"And hasn't recovered yet!" triumphed Mother Richards. "He couldn't possibly stand another long overland trip—and I don't want to stand it, either. Why, we're just nicely settled, all together again, on our own farm."

"Well, some of us ought to go," persisted Terry. "I'd a heap rather dig gold than plant it.'

"I notice you aren't extra fond of digging potatoes, though," slily remarked Harry. "You say it makes your back ache!"

"Digging gold's different," retorted Terry. "Besides, we've a gold mine already, haven't we? The one dad discovered. If we don't get there soon somebody else will dig everything out of it and we'll have only a hole."

"That will be a cellar for us, anyway, to put a house over," mused Harry, who always saw opportunities.

"I don't lay much store on that claim of mine," confessed Terry's father. "The country'll be over-run, and if the spot was worth anything it's probably jumped, or will be jumped very quickly. And I don't remember where it is."

"But what a rush!" faltered Mrs. Richards, glancing through the paper. "The news does say twenty-five thousand people about to cross the plains and more coming. I do declare! I'm sure some of them will suffer dreadfully."

"Yes; they'll earn their way, all right," agreed Father Richards. "It's a tough region, yonder at the mountains—and the more people, the tighter the living, till they raise other crops than gold."

"Then that's the reason why we ought to be starting—so as to get in ahead," persisted Terry. "This ranching's awful slow, and it's toler'ble hard work, too. Putting stuff in and taking it out again."

"You can't expect to 'take stuff out' unless you do

put some in, first, can you?" demanded his father. "That's the law of life. But if you think you can dodge hard work, go on and try."

"Where?" blurted Terry.

"Anywhere. To the Pike's Peak country. You have my permission." And his father's blue eyes twinkled.

"Oh, Ralph!" protested Terry's mother, aghast. "Don't joke about it."

"Aw, I can't go alone," stammered Terry, taken aback.

"I'm not joking," asserted Father Richards. "But he'll have to find his own outfit, like other gold-seekers. Then he can go, and we'll follow when we can."

Mother Richards dropped the paper.

"Ralph! Have you the fever again? Oh, dear!"

Gold-fever she meant, of course. Father Richards smiled, and rubbed his hair where it showed a white streak over the wound received when on their road out from the Missouri River, a year ago, to settle on the ranch, he had been knocked off his horse in fording Wildcat Creek, and had disappeared for months. Only by great good fortune had Terry found him, wandering in, through a blizzard, from the Pike's Peak gold fields; and had brought him home in time for a merry Christmas.

"Not 'again.' Don't know as I'd call it gold-fever, exactly. But I feel a bit like Terry does—I want to join the crowd. It was the same way, in coming to Kansas. We thought this was to be the West; and now there's another West. This ranch can be made to pay—I'm certain it can if we're able to hold on long

enough and weather the droughts and grasshoppers and low prices. But——"

"Harry and Terry and I made it pay," reminded Mother Richards, with a flash of pride.

"Yes, you all did bravely. But you managed it by cutting and selling the timber. The timber won't last forever, and the grasshoppers may! This is rather a lonely life, for you, yet, up in here. Out at the mountains, though, they've founded those two towns, Denver and Auraria, and probably others; and I believe opportunities will be more there than here."

"Do you intend to sell the ranch?" asked Mrs. Richards, a little pale. She loved the ranch, which she had helped to make.

"We'll talk that over. I wouldn't sell unless you consented. It's your place; you and Terry and Harry've done most of the work."

"But you said I could go right away, Pa; didn't you?" enthused Terry. "Then I'll take the wagon and Buck and Spot, and Shep—and Harry; and——"

"Hold on," bade his father. "Not quite so fast. I said you're to find your own outfit. If we sell the ranch, you'll have to leave part of it as a sample to show to customers. Those oxen are valuable. Oxen'll be as good as gold, in this country. The rush across the plains will sweep up every kind of work critter. If you take Buck and Spot, how'll anybody on this ranch do the ploughing? And if you take the wagon, what'll become of the hauling?"

"And if you take Harry, who'll help your father and me?" chimed in his mother.

"Shucks!" bemoaned Terry. "There's the old mare, and the colt—and a cow—and——"

"And a half-buffalo, and a tame turkey, and a yellow mule twenty years of age if she's a day," completed his father. "Buck and Spot beat the lot of them put together. No, sir; I'll not spare those oxen, for any wild-goose chase across to the mountains. But I'll tell you what you can do. You can have Harry, and find the rest of your come-along."

"Hum!" murmured Harry, who had been scratching his nose and looking wise. "That sounds like a dare. Let's go outside, Terry."

He rose. Terry wonderingly followed him. Within, Mother Richards gazed dubiously upon Father Richards.

"Are you really in earnest, Ralph?"

"Yes; after a fashion. Terry can't make such a trip alone; he's too young; but he'd be safe with Harry. Enough cultivating's done on the ranch so I can manage for the next few months. That would give you and me a chance to dispose of the place when we were ready—and it will sell better with the crops showing. And besides, I agree with you that I'm not quite in shape yet to stand the trip. By the time we were free to go, those two boys would have the country yonder pretty well spied out, and they'd send us back reliable information. Harry has a level head."

"And maybe they'd be so disappointed they'd want to come back, themselves!" hopefully asserted Mrs. Richards. "Terry'd be cured of his gold-seeking fever. Anyway, they haven't gone, yet. They can't have the

oxen, and they can't have my cow, and if they took the old mare how'd I ever visit my neighbors, and if they took the colt he's not heavy enough for hard work, and the yellow mule won't pull alone, and Duke won't pull at all, and you've refused them the wagon—and I sha'n't let them walk. So I don't believe I'll worry."

"Um—m!" muttered Father Richards, rubbing his hair. "I won't be positive about all that. What Terry doesn't cook up, Harry will. They're both of them too uncommon smart. I reckon they're into some scheme already."

And so they were. He resumed his reading of the papers. Mrs. Richards proceeded to finish the evening housework. Suddenly they were interrupted. Outside welled a frantic chorus of shouting and cheering and barking and clattering.

"For goodness' sake!" ejaculated Mrs. Richards; and they sprang to the door.

Harry, who walked with a slight limp because when a boy down in Virginia he had hurt his foot, had beckoned Terry on, around the hen-house, out of earshot of the cabin. Here he had paused, and scratched his long nose again—a sure sign of mischief. Slender and smooth-faced and young was Harry, but stronger than anybody'd think. The way he could ride bareback, and could fell timber—whew! And that long head of his was a mine in itself.

"Shall we go?" he queried.

"Will you, Harry? Do you want to go?"

"Yes, I reckon I do. I always knew I was cut out for a miner instead of a schoolmaster or a farmer."

"How'll we go, then?" demanded Terry. "Thunder! We've nothing to start with, 'cept our feet. Dad says we'll have to find our own outfit."

"And one of the feet's a bad one," commented Harry. "I suppose we *could* walk, and carry our stuff —or carry part of it and come back for the rest."

"Five hundred miles?" cried Terry. "Aw, jiminy! We'd be the last in, if we tried to carry stuff on our backs."

"And we'd be the first out, if we didn't carry stuff," returned Harry. "We'd be frozen out and starved out, both. Now, let's see." He scratched his nose, and was solemn—save that his pointed chin twitched, and his wide brown eyes laughed. "We can't have the oxen; and we mustn't take the old mare or the colt, because they're a part of the ranch; or the brindled cow, because she belongs to Mother Richards' butter and milk department; or Pete the turkey, because he can't swim; so that leaves us Jenny and Duke."

"That old yellow mule, and a half-buffalo!" yapped Terry. "But they're a part of the ranch stock, too, and besides——"

"No, they're ours," corrected Harry. "Jenny's mine, and I'm hers. I brought her in here—or, rather, she brought me in; in fact, we brought each other. And Duke is yours. You rescued him from a life among the wild buffalo—a rough, low life, the ungrateful brute!—and his mother's disowned him since he learned to eat grass and hay, and nobody else wants him. Jenny works for her keep, but he doesn't do a thing except bawl and eat and sleep and pick quarrels

with his betters. He's only an idle good-for-nothing."

"What do you aim to do, then?" questioned Terry, staring open-mouthed. "Ride 'em? We can't have the wagon. You going to ride Jenny and make me ride Duke? We'd both of us be split in two! I'd rather walk. I'd make great time, wouldn't I, on that buffalo—and Jenny mostly moves up and down in one spot! Your saddle's falling to pieces. It's just tied with rope."

"Hum!" mused Harry. 'We'll hitch them."

"What to?"

"A wagon. I know where there are two wheels and an axle."

"Where?"

"In an old mud-hole. The front end traveled on, but the hind end stayed."

"Jenny won't pull single, and Duke won't pull at all."

"Make 'em pull together, then."

"What'll we do for the rest of the wagon?"

"Make it."

"Huh!" reflected Terry, trying to be convinced. "That'll be a great outfit. Where'll we get our supplies?"

"Maybe somebody'll grub-stake us, on shares. But no matter about that. We'll learn not to eat when we haven't anything to eat. If," continued Harry, "a couple of fellows our size, with a yellow mule and a half-buffalo and two wagon-wheels, can't get through to the mountains, I'd like to know who can! So it's high time we started. Come on."

"What are you going to do first?" demanded Terry, bewildered by Harry's sudden movement.

"Educate Duke, of course. We'll put him and Jenny to the drag and give them their first lesson. You be driving Duke in and I'll talk with Jenny."

Away hustled Harry, at his rapid limp, for a halter and Jenny, where in a stall she was munching a feed of hay as reward after her trip to town. With the interested Shep (shaggy black dog) at his heels, prepared to help, Terry hastened into the pasture and rounded up Duke, the half-buffalo, from amidst the other animals. Duke was now a yearling—grown to be a sturdy, stocky youngster since Terry had captured him and his brindled cow mother during the buffalo hunt with the Delaware Indians last summer.

Knowing Terry well, and tamed to everything except work, Duke submitted to being driven out. In the ranch yard Harry was waiting with big, gaunt Jenny, already attached by collar and traces to the drag. The drag was only an old rail, heavy and spike-studded, used to uproot the brush when the ranch land was cleared.

It required considerable maneuvering to fit an ox-bow around Duke's short neck, and yoke him to the drag. He seemed dumbly astonished. Jenny laid back her long ears in disgust with her strange mate.

"Be patient with him, Jenny," pleaded Harry. "He's only a boy, and part Indian, while you're a cultured lady. I think," he said, to Terry, "that I'll do the driving, for the first spell on this Pike's Peak trail." Holding the lines attached to Jenny's bit (but Duke,

ox-fashion, had no lines), he fell a few paces to rear. "No," he added, "that won't answer. You drive Duke and I'll drive Jenny. Get your whip."

Terry stationed himself with the ox-whip at Duke's flank. Harry stepped upon the drag, and balanced.

"Gid-dap, Jenny!" he bade.

"G'lang, Duke!" bade Terry.

Jenny, sidling as far as she could in the traces, her ears flat, started. Duke stayed. Consequently, Jenny did not get very far.

"Duke! G'lang, Duke!" implored Terry, desperately, cracking his whip.

"Pull, Jenny! Pull!" encouraged Harry, balancing on the drag now askew.

Up went Jenny's heels, down went Duke's head, away went Harry on the drag and Terry on the run. Shep, thinking it great sport, barked gaily.

"Whoa, Jenny! Whoa now!"

"Haw, Duke! Whoa-haw! Gee! Whoa!"

And from the cabin doorway Father Richards clapped and shouted, and Mother Richards called warnings.

Harry was speedily thrown from the bouncing drag, but he clung to the lines. Having careered, plunging and tugging and side-stepping, until she was astraddle of the outside trace, Jenny stopped. Duke, who had been bawling and galloping, half hauled, half frightened, stopped likewise, the yoke crooked on his neck; and all stood heaving.

"This'll never do," panted Harry. "Jenny's too fast for him—either her legs are too long or his are too

short. We'll have to train them singly and hitch them tandem. That's it: tandem."

"You mean one in front of the other?" wheezed Terry.

"Yes."

"Which where, then?"

"Oh, Jenny for the wheel team and Duke for the lead team, I think," decided Harry. "By rights, Jenny ought to have the lead, because she's faster; and Duke ought to have the pole, because he's heavier. But Jenny is quick-tempered with her heels, you know, and Duke is quick-tempered with his head, so we'd best keep their tempers separated. We can teach Duke to 'haw' and 'gee,' but Jenny's main accomplishment is simply to 'haw-haw.' "

"Here comes George," announced Terry. "Now he'll 'haw-haw,' too."

Through the gloaming another boy was loping in, on a spotted pony. He was a wiry, black-eyed boy—George Stanton, from the Stanton ranch some two miles down the valley.

"Whoopee! Which way you going?" he challenged. "What is it—a show?"

"Going to Pike's Peak," retorted Terry.

"Tonight? With that team? Aw——!"

"Pretty soon, though. We're practising."

"Watch us, and you'll see us drive to the corral," invited Harry. "Let's turn 'em around, Terry. Easy, now. I'll hold Jenny back and you hurry Duke."

"I'll help," proffered the obliging George. "Gwan, Duke."

"Duke! Gwan!" ordered Terry.

"Whoa, Jenny! Steady, Jenny!" cautioned Harry.

With Harry hauling on the lines, George, pony-back, pressing against Duke's shoulder, and Terry urging him at the flank, they all managed to achieve a half circle. Duke, his eyes bulging with rage and alarm, occasionally balked; Jenny flattened her ears and shook her scarred head; but finally the corral bars were really reached. It seemed like quite a victory.

"First lesson ended," decreed Harry. "Too dark, and we're tired if they aren't. We'll put 'em in together and they can talk it over."

Released into the corral, neither Jenny nor Duke appeared to be in very good humor. Duke rumbled and pawed, flinging the dirt; Jenny laid her ears and bared her teeth. Suddenly Duke charged; whereat Jenny nimbly whirled, and met him with both hind hoofs. Aside staggered Duke, to stand a moment, glaring at her and rumbling; then he turned and stalked stiffly to the other end of the enclosure. Jenny "hee-hawed" shrill and derisive, and kneeling down, rolled and kicked; scrambled up, shook herself, and began to nose about for husks.

"Now they understand each other," remarked Harry. "They've agreed to pull singly."

"Say—are you fellows really going to Pike's Peak?" asked George. "With that team?"

"Yes, sir-ee. We're in training, aren't we, Terry?" responded Harry.

"That's right. Dad said if we'd find our own outfit we could strike out."

"We've got the fever, too, sort of, down at our house," confessed George. "That's what I rode up about. Now I guess I'd better go back and tell the folks. Maybe I can join you," he added, waxing excited.

"The more the merrier. That will make twenty-five thousand and three," laughed Harry.

"If I can't, I'll be coming later," called back George.

"We'll locate a claim for you," promised Terry, grandly—as if he and Harry were already on the way.

CHAPTER II

THE "PIKE'S PEAK LIMITED"

"I'LL tell you what I'll do," spoke Terry's father, finally. "I'll lend you $100—'grub-stake' you, as they say, from the dust that I fetched back last winter. That's half. And I'm to have half interest in whatever you find."

"Hum! This sounds like a good business proposition, if you mean it," accepted Harry, scratching his nose.

"Do you mean it, Dad?" cried Terry, overjoyed. "Supposing we find your mine. Do we get half of that?"

"That's part yours, anyway. But I don't think you'll find it unoccupied. Doubt if you find it at all. You'll likely meet up with some of the Russell brothers out there, though. You might ask Green Russell or Oliver or the doctor if they have any recollection of my being along with 'em, one of their Fifty-eighters, by name of Jones, and if they remember where I got the dust. Yes, I mean it: you and Harry'll need supplies, and you ought to have a little cash in hand besides."

"But we can go to digging gold, the first day we get there, can't we?" argued Terry.

"You might be a bit awkward and break a pick or shovel, and want a new one," remarked his father, drily.

Anyway, the $100 was not to be sneezed at. To be sure, Harry, with Terry assisting, had proceeded right ahead making ready. He was a wonder, was Harry. He had brought the two wagon-wheels from the mud-hole, and (Terry helping) had constructed a two-wheeled cart: had fitted a shallow body on the axle-tree and attached a pair of long heavy shafts. Jenny was to haul in the shafts, and the chains of Duke were to be run back to stout eye-bolts.

"You see," reasoned Harry, "some days when Jenny is tired and wishes to stop, Duke will be pulling the cart and she'll have to come along whether or no."

Jenny's collar and Duke's wooden bow and single yoke (manufactured to suit the case, from cast-off materials) were rough and ready, but no worse than the rest of the harness. However, on the whole Harry was rather proud of his work, and Terry was rather proud of Harry. Just now they were engaged in stretching a canvas hood over the cart.

As for Jenny, the yellow mule, and Duke, the half-buffalo—their days, of late, had been exciting ones. While they were being trained to haul tandem the ranch yard had resembled a circus-ring, much to the alarm of Terry's mother, and to the entertainment of Terry's father and the Stantons.

George and Virgie (who was his little sister) came up, whenever they could, to watch the preparation; and Mr. Stanton was considerably interested, himself. But

George was more than interested; he was roundly sceptical—also, as anybody might see, envious.

"Aw, you don't think you're ever going to get there with that contraption, do you?" he challenged. "A rickety old cart, and an old mule and a half-buffalo! You'll bust down."

"I'd rather bust down than bust up," retorted Terry.

"It'll take you a year. Look at how your wheels wobble." And George added, somewhat oddly: "Wish I was going."

"If it'll take us a year, you might as well wait and come on with your own folks later," reminded Harry. "You'll probably travel in style, and pass us."

"That's right," hopefully answered George. "We'll pass you during the summer. You see if we don't."

"Said the hare to the tortoise," gibed Harry. "Terry and Jenny and Duke and I may be slow, but we're powerful sure—if our wheels keep turning."

He picked up a tar-pot and a stick, and stepped to the cart, on which the hood at last had been stretched.

"What you going to do now?"

"Don't hurry me," drawled Harry. "This isn't a hurry outfit." On the canvas he drew a letter. "What's that, Virgie?"

"'P'!"

"Right. And what's this?"

"'I'!"

"You're a smart girl—a smarter girl than your brother," praised Harry. "Next?"

"'K'!"

"Next?"

"'E'!"

"Next?"

"A—comma!" declared Virgie.

"Oh, pshaw!" deplored Harry. "You go to the foot." And he finished the word: "PIKE'S." He stepped back to admire the result.

"Pike's Peak or Bust! That's what you ought to put on," yelped George. "Pike's Peak or Bust! There was a wagon went down the valley yesterday with that on it. And it had four wheels instead of two."

"'Pike's Peak and No Bust,' is our motto," corrected Harry. He daubed rapidly, until the words stood: "PIKE'S PEAK LIMITED."

"I guess you're 'limited,'" sniggered George. "Anyway," he confessed, loyally, "wish I was going with you. I'll trade you my pistol for a share in your mine if you find one."

"That old pistol with a wooden hammer?" scoffed Terry. "You come on out and we'll give you a whole mine, maybe, if we have more than we can work!"

"I'll cook for you," piped Virgie.

"All right, Virgie," quoth Harry. "George can shoot buffalo with his pistol, and you can cook all he gets! You be ready tomorrow early, and we'll take you aboard on our way down."

"Do you start tomorrow?" blurted George.

"Sure thing," asserted Terry. "Stop at Manhattan, is all, to get supplies. Then we hit the trail for the land of gold."

The painting of "PIKE'S PEAK LIMITED" had indeed been the final touch. The start was set for the

next morning immediately after breakfast. That evening in the cabin they all tried to be merry and hopeful, but Terry went to bed in the loft, where he and Harry slept, with a lump in his throat after his mother's goodnight hug and kiss; and although he dreamed exciting dreams of a marvelously quick trip and a row of mountains blotched with precious yellow, he awakened to the same curious lump.

But Harry hustled about briskly, before breakfast, to feed and water Jenny and Duke. Harry was always the first out.

"Gold, gold, gold, gold!
Bright and yellow, hard and cold,"

he declaimed. "Eh, Jenny? Or should I say:

"Jenny, Jenny! All pure gold!
Bright and yellow and hard to hold!"

So Terry aided by carrying the stuff out, to be stowed in the cart. After breakfast there was no delay. Presently Jenny and Duke stood harnessed tandem, and rather wondering at the decisive manner with which they were handled. They little knew that six hundred miles lay before them.

"All aboard for Pike's Peak!" announced Harry. "You're to walk behind, Terry, for a piece, and pick up the wheels if they drop off. I'll encourage Duke and Jenny not to look back. Goodbye, folks."

"Goodbye, Mother. Goodbye, Father," repeated

Terry. "Come on, Shep. You're going. Of course!"

Shep gamboled and barked. He was going and he did not care where, if only he went.

"We'll follow, in a month or two—as soon as we sell the place," called Father Richards. "We and the Stantons, too, I guess. Get posted on the country, and be careful. Good luck. Look up the Russells."

"Yes, be very careful," enjoined Mother Richards. "Don't get lost, and don't sleep in wet clothes, and don't fail to send word back often, and, Terry, don't disobey Harry, and, Harry, don't you try to perform all the work, and, both of you, don't have any disputes or quarrel with *any*body, and don't omit to eat hearty meals——"

"Oh, Mother Richards!" laughed Harry. "This is a *Do* concern, not a *Don't*. But we'll remember. You'll find us ready to trade you our gold dust for a pan of good corn-bread. Goodbye. Gee-up, Duke! Step ahead, Jenny! Whoop-ee! G'lang!"

"Whoop-ee!" cheered Terry, stanchly, as now he trudged in the wake of the creaking, lurching cart. "Hooray for the Pike's Peak Limited to the gold mines!"

They were on their way; they were real gold-seekers, bound for the Pike's Peak country. In his cowhide boots and red flannel shirt and slouch hat, Terry felt that no one should make fun of their rough-and-ready outfit. A half-buffalo, and a yellow mule, and a two-wheeled cart with a regular prairie-schooner hood, and a tar-pot hanging to the axle, indicated serious purpose.

Black Shep loped happily from side to side, hunting through the weeds. At the "near" or left of Jenny strode Harry, with a slight limp, a willow pole in his hand to serve for occasionally touching up Duke. Harry also wore cowhide boots, trousers tucked in, and a battered slouch hat, but a gray shirt instead of blue or red. However, a red 'kerchief for a tie gave him a natty appearance.

"Duke! Hi! Step along!" he urged. And—"Not so fast, Jenny!" he cautioned. Duke pulled steadily, keeping the chains fairly tight; Jenny, her ears wobbling, but now and then laid back in protest at one thing or another, slothfully dragged her long legs. Together they easily twitched the lightly laden cart over the rutted road.

George and Virgie were waiting in front of the Stanton ranch, to see the gold-seekers pass. Mrs. Stanton waved from the ranch-house door, and Mr. Stanton from the potato field.

"Where are your guns?" demanded George, first crack, much as if he had expected to see them heavily armed on this peaceful trail down to Manhattan.

"Got a shotgun in the cart," answered Terry.

"How'll you fight Injuns, then? Where are your mining tools—picks and spades and things?"

"Get 'em later."

"Coming, Virgie?" hailed Harry.

Her finger in her mouth, Virgie shook her head in its pink sunbonnet.

"I can't. My mother needs me."

"All right. Sorry. We need a cook. Duke! What

are you stopping for? Gwan! Hump along, Jenny!" And to creak of top and jangle of fry-pan and tin plates and cups, and water bucket clashing with tar pot, the Pike's Peak Limited pressed on.

"We'll see you later, though," promised George, gazing after wistfully. "Goodbye."

"Goodbye, George."

All down the valley people called and waved goodbye, for the word that the "Richards boys" were going to Pike's Peak had traveled ahead. And many a joke was leveled at Duke and Jenny and the two-wheeled cart bearing its Pike's Peak sign. But who cared? Everybody seemed bent upon following as soon as possible; and as Harry remarked: "We're doing instead of talking!"

Manhattan town was a day and a half, at walking gait.

"No ranch house for us tonight," quoth Harry. "We'll start right in making our own camp. And we'll have to start in with a system, too. First we'll noon, for an hour, to rest the animals—not to mention ourselves. My feet are about one hundred and ten degrees hot, already. And we'll make camp every evening at six o'clock. If we don't travel by system we'll wear out. There's nothing like regularity."

So they nooned beside a creek; had lunch and let Duke and Jenny drink and graze. That evening, promptly, they camped, near water. Harry had elected to do the cooking and dish-washing, Terry was to forage for fuel and tend to the animals.

Jenny was staked out for fear that she would take

the notion to amble back to the ranch. Duke, who appeared to think much more of her than she did of him, could be depended upon to stay wherever she stayed. Harry boiled coffee, and fried bacon, and there was the batch of bread that Mother Richards had baked for the first stages of the journey.

When everything had been tidied up and the camp was ship-shape, in the dusk they "bedded down," each to his coverings. Whew, but it felt good to shed those hot boots! They also removed their trousers, and used them and their coats for pillows.

Harry sighed with luxury.

"First camp—twelve miles from home," he said.

"Wonder how many camps we'll make before we get there," proposed Terry.

"Some forty, I reckon," murmured Harry. "Six hundred miles at an average of fifteen miles a day—and there you are. But we have to make only one camp at a time."

"Hello!" cried a voice, through the dusk.

Shep growled, where he was curled, but instantly flopped his tail, and with a quick look in the direction of the voice, Harry called, gladly:

"Hello yourself. Come in."

"Hello, Sol," welcomed Terry.

They sat up in their blankets. A horseman approached along the back trail, and halted. He was a lean, well-built man, with long hair and full beard, and sat erect upon a small but active horse. He wore a peaked, silver-bound sombrero or Mexican hat, a black velvet Mexican jacket half revealed under a gaily

striped blanket over his shoulders, tight black velvet trousers slashed with a white strip, and on his heels jingling spurs. The saddle was enormous, and the bridle jingly and silver-mounted. But he was no Mexican; he was Sol Judy, the American horse-trader, who had been in California and on the plains, and was counted as almost the very first friend made by Terry and his mother when they had started in to "ranch it," a year ago, while waiting for Mr. Richards to come home. And a very good friend Sol Judy had remained.

"How's the Pike's Peak Limited by this time?" he queried, with a smile, as he sat looking down. "On the way to the elephant, are you, and as snug as a bug in a rug?"

"'Light, 'light," bade Harry. "Have a cup of coffee, Sol. Wait till I put on my pants."

"No, no; thank you," declined Sol. "I've eaten and I'm going on through." It seemed as though Sol was always bound somewhere else. "I passed the ranch and stopped off a minute, and they told me you'd gone. So I knew I'd probably catch you. I'm on my way, myself."

"To the mines, Sol?"

"Yes, sir-ee. Just got back; been in Leavenworth a short spell, and am headed west again, for more of the elephant."

"What elephant?"

Sol laughed.

"The big show. 'Seeing the elephant,' they call it, now, when they set out for the Pike's Peak diggin's—

because there are folks who don't believe there is any such critter."

"Did you see him, Sol?"

"Well, you know we've seen a goose-quill or two containing a few freckles from his hide."

"What trail's the best?" queried Harry.

"I went out by the Santy Fee Trail and came back by the Platte government trail. But those are too long for you. I hear tell a lot of people are going to try the trail straight west, up the Smoky Hill. If I were you, though, I wouldn't tackle that. The water peters out. You'd do better to cut northwest from Riley or Junction City, over the divide between the Solomon and the Republican, and strike the Republican. Jones and Russell, the Leavenworth freighters, are going to put on a line of stages by that route, and they know what they're about. They've surveyed a route already, and I shouldn't wonder if you'd find some of their stakes. Anyway, the stages'll overtake you, and then you'll have their tracks and stations. On the divide you'll keep to the high ground and head the creeks and save a lot of trouble. Always travel high; that's my notion. The fellows that try to follow the brush river-bottoms are the ones who get stuck. You may have to make one or two dry marches, but you can keep your water cask full."

"What's doing out at the mines, Sol?"

"Doing? There were about two hundred people there when I left. They'd had a nice mild winter; only one cold snap at Christmas. They're all collected at Cherry Creek; they've started two towns opposite

each other, near where the creek joins the Platte. The one on the west side the creek they've called Auraria; the one on the east side was St. Charles for a time, but now it's named Denver, after Governor Denver of Kansas Territory. Auraria's the bigger, to date. What it'll be in a month or two, can't tell. That's where they're all living, anyhow: in Auraria and Denver. S'pose you've read in the papers that last fall they held a meeting and set off the Pike's Peak country as 'Arapahoe County' of Kansas, elected a delegate to the Kansas legislature, and another to go to Washington and get the government to let 'em be organized as a new separate Territory. He hasn't done much, though. Congress won't listen to him. It's all too sudden. Proof of the elephant hadn't reached there yet."

"Are they digging lots of gold, Sol?" asked Terry, eagerly.

"You could put all the gold I saw in two hands," declared Sol. "It's mostly color, and flake gold washed from the creeks. They haven't got down to real mining, and some of the people who counted on an easy time at getting rich quick are plumb disgusted. What's been done since I left I can't say. But the gold's in the mountains, and it'll take work to dig it out."

"How far are the mountains from the towns? How far's Pike's Peak, Sol?" demanded Terry.

"The real mountains are about forty miles, I judge; and that Pike's Peak we're all hearing of is near a hundred. 'Cherry Creek' diggin's is a heap better name

for the place than 'Pike's Peak.' Pike's Peak is away down south and there aren't any mines there, yet. Well, how's your outfit behaving? Does the mule pull with the buffalo?"

"First-rate," answered Harry. "They're used to each other."

"That's good. Usually a mule's got no love for a buffalo. You want to watch out when you get into the buffalo country or you'll have trouble, sure, with one or the other of your critters. And I'd advise you to peg along as fast as you can and keep ahead of the crowd or there won't be a piece of fuel left as large as a match, to cook with."

"Jiminy! That sounds like a rush," exclaimed Harry. "Then what the papers say is true—about twenty-five thousand people."

"Twenty-five thousand!" laughed Sol. "I've been at Leavenworth, and Kansas City too, and every steamer from the south is loaded to the stacks. You can't see the steamers for the people! Those two cities are regular camps—streets jammed, merchants selling tons of supplies, wagons and critters hardly to be bought for love or money, and the country around white with wagons and tents of folks making ready—waiting for a start. Same way up at Council Bluffs, where the crossing is from Iowa into Nebraska to strike the Platte River Trail. In a month the Platte Trail will be so thick you can walk clear from the Missouri to the mountains on the tops of the prairie schooners. So you do well to peg along early. The rush is begun." Sol reined up his horse, preparing

to leave. "Good luck to you, boys. I'll see you at the mines."

"We've got one waiting for us, maybe, you know, Sol," reminded Terry. "And—

"All right," answered Harry. "We'll see you in the land of the elephant, anyway. So long."

And Sol galloped south, into the darkness.

CHAPTER III

DUKE ON A RAMPAGE

BEFORE noon of the next day Harry, in the advance guiding Jenny and Duke, swung his hat and cheered.

"Did you ever see the like!" he cried. "The rush has begun, all right."

"I should say!" gasped Terry.

They had arrived in sight of the town of Manhattan, just above the mouth of the Big Blue, on the Kansas River emigrant trail from the east. The prairie for half a mile around was alive with campers; the smoke from a host of dinner fires drifted upon the clear air, and a great chorus arose—shouts of men, cries of children, bawling of cows and oxen, barking of dogs.

"And this is only one trail from the Missouri," said Harry. "Hurrah! Gwan, Duke, Jenny! Gwan!"

As they proceeded down the valley road, for the town, presently they struck the overflow of the encampment, and began to be greeted from every side. Duke and Jenny apparently attracted much attention.

"Whar you think you're goin', boys?"

"Why don't you get astraddle an' ride?"

"Is that a genuyine buff'lo?"

"Who invented that rig?"

"I'll trade you a cow for your mule, strangers."

"When do you give your show?"

And so forth, and so forth. Men laughed, women and children stared, dogs barked, and Shep, bristling, took refuge under the cart. To all the sallies Harry, and sometimes Terry, made good-natured reply, for this was a good-natured crowd.

Many wagons besides theirs bore signs. There were several with "Pike's Peak or Bust," which evidently was popular. "To the Land of Gold" was another favorite scrawl. One wagon announced: "Mind Your Own Business." Another proclaimed: "From Pike County for Pike's Peak." And another: "We're Going to See the Elephant—Are You?"

As they entered the main road they turned in just ahead of a rickety farm wagon with flimsy makeshift cotton hood, containing a strange medley of children, women, household furniture, what-not. It was drawn by a cow and a gaunt horse, a goat was led at the rear, a dusty, sallow man trudged alongside. The wagon-hood said: "Noah's Ark."

"How'll you swap outfits, strangers?" sung the man.

"Nary swap," laughed Harry.

"Whar you from?"

"Up the Blue."

"We're from Injianny," quavered one of the women, on the front seat. "It's a powerful long way to the gold fields, isn't it?"

"You've hardly started yet," replied Harry. "But jus' keep a-going." And—"Whoa, Duke! Look out,

there! Gee! Gee-up!" He thwacked Duke smartly on the shoulder with the willow pole, and ran to his head. The road before and behind was thronged with the travelers, and Duke, not accustomed to so much confusion, had been waxing restive. He snorted, his eyes bulged, his little tail jerked, and he made a sideways jump at an annoying dog. Out flew Shep, rolled the dog over and over until he fled yelping, while with rapid commands Harry quieted Duke. Even Jenny the yellow mule was showing symptoms of rebellion.

"We'll never get into town, this way," panted Harry. "Let's drive around and on to the river and unspan for noon. Then you watch Duke, and I'll ride Jenny back in for supplies."

So, picking their path, they began to circuit the little town. To do this was considerable of an undertaking, for the tents and wagons and people were scattered everywhere over the prairie, and Duke much resented the shouts and laughter and smoke and barking dogs and the incessant orders from Harry. His eyes bulged, he rumbled indignantly, he shook his head, the froth dripped from his lips.

On a sudden a mean little cur darted from one side and nipped him in his heel—and this was the last straw. With a lunge and a kick away he bolted, dragging the surprised Jenny until she also lost her temper, and together they dragged the cart.

Harry ran, shouting. Terry ran. Shep yapped excitedly.

"Stampede!"

"Look out for the buffalo!"

"Hi! Hi!"

"Head 'em off!"

Women hastily clutched children, men waved their arms and hats.

"Duke! Jenny! Whoa! Whoa!" vainly yelled Harry and Terry, following at best speed in the wake of the lurching cart.

Through among the camps galloped Duke and Jenny —Duke cavorting, Jenny plunging, the cart bounding and skidding, the pails and cooking utensils rattling, people scampering from the path; and Harry and Terry, in their heavy boots, pursuing, wild with alarm. Something serious was likely to result.

There! A dinner group was shattered—away rolled the pot, and the fire flew. There—down collapsed a tent, as the cart struck the guy-ropes! Into a clearing burst the two animals—but straight for a wagon and ox team facing them, beyond! The wagon had no hood, and its principal occupants were a black-bearded, black-hatted, red-shirted man on the seat and a large barrel in the box.

Duke must have been seeing red, by this time. His head down, he charged at the wagon, or oxen, or both. The man on the seat yelled; swung his arm at Duke; swung his whip at his own team—tried to turn them; and then, in a great panic, with a mighty leap landed asprawl and losing his hat, legged for safety, his boot-tags flopping and his shaggy hair tossing.

"Ha, ha!" roared the spectators. And the man did indeed look funny.

The yoke of oxen suddenly awakened to the danger, and sharply veered. Duke just missed them, at an angle—he and Jenny both, but the cart struck the rear of the wagon, tilted it, tilted the barrel, and there stayed, locking wheels with it, while Duke and Jenny were brought to a quick stand.

Up raced Harry and Terry, to investigate damages. At the same time back clumped the man, aglare with rage.

"Oh, crickity!" gasped Terry. "It's Pine Knot Ike!"

"Hyar!" he bellowed. He searched for his precious hat and clapped it on his ragged locks. Now his hair and whiskers stood out all around his face. "Hyar! I want to ask what you mean by rampagin' through a peaceful collection o' citizens an' endangerin' the life an' property of a man in pursuit of his lawful okkipation? I air mild, strangers; I kin stan' a good deal, but now I air after blood. My name is Ike Chubbers, but most people call me Pine Knot Ike, 'cause I air so plaguey hard to chaw. That thar air your buffler, air it? Waal, I will now perceed to eat him."

With that, Ike whipped a huge revolver from his belt—and instantly Harry sprang like a cat for him —grabbed the arm—"None of that, Pine Knot Ike!" —bang went the gun, and the bullet plinked somewhere, but not into Duke.

"None of that, Mr. Ike Chubbers!" repeated Harry, stoutly forcing the muzzle upward. "You can't shoot any animal of ours. Besides, no damage had been done."

"Yes; you can't go shooting promiscuous through a camp like this, friend," spoke somebody in the crowd that had gathered. "Those boys aren't to blame for their stampede. Put your gun where it belongs."

"Why didn't you stay with your wagon?" demanded somebody else.

Pine Knot Ike slowly relaxed. Harry released his grip on the revolver, and Ike glared around. His fierce black eyes came back to Harry, who stood breathless but ready.

"We have met before, stranger," he growled. "You air the schoolmaster who nigh murdered me in this hyar very town. You know me, I reckon?"

"I am the schoolmaster who made you dance, with your own revolver, after you'd threatened to kill me if I didn't drink liquor for you," retorted Harry. "Yes, I know you for a big bulldozer."

And Terry well remembered the first encounter, last summer, between Harry and Pine Knot Ike, when Harry not only had refused to drink but had cleverly snatched Ike's gun and ordered him to dance as a penalty. Yet Ike was as large in body as two Harry Reveres.

"Haw, haw!" laughed the crowd.

Ike glared around again.

"I cherish no bad feelin's," he alleged. "I air a man o' peace. I air so peaceful that I hain't bit a nail in two for nigh a full week. I mostly drink milk." His breath did not *smell* milky! "I air so peaceful that I gener'ly lay down an' let folks walk on me. But I would ask if a peaceful man pursuin' a lawful okkipa-

tion, on his way to build up a civi-*li*-zation in them Rocky Mountings air to be run over by two boys an' a wild buffler an' a yaller mule?"

"Hey! Your whiskey's leakin'!" called a voice.

And that was so. Pine Knot Ike exclaimed and leaped for his wagon. The odor in the air had not been entirely from his breath. The bullet intended for Duke had punctured the barrel near the top; and now the wagon was dripping.

Ike hastily clambered in. First he tried to stop the hole with his thumb; next with his hat; and while the crowd hooted he shamelessly stooped and glued his lips to the spot!

"Haw, haw! There's his 'lawful okkipation'!"

"That's his idee of 'civi-*li*-zation,' is it?"

"Pity the hole isn't at the bottom instead of near the top," remarked Harry, disgusted. "Come on, Terry."

With a little help they freed the cart from the Chubbers wagon; and driving the now quieted Duke and Jenny, proceeded on their way. Behind, they heard Pine Knot Ike haranguing the crowd, proclaiming that he was a "ruined man." But he seemed to get scant sympathy.

Without more adventure they completed the half circuit of Manhattan town, crossed the main road and between the road and the Kansas River found a shady spot where they might noon comfortably. Duke was tied by a fore-leg to a tree (they knew better than to tie him by the horns, for he was strong enough to break any rope, that way); and after lunch Harry

rode Jenny bareback, down to town, for supplies.

The road up-river was one line of outfits toiling onward under a cloud of dust. They were interesting to watch. Was the whole United States moving westward for the mountains? The constant procession passed—wagons of all descriptions, men horseback and muleback, men, women and children afoot; a party of men accompanying a push-cart hauled by two of them in the shafts. The "Noah's Ark" wagon passed. And Pine Knot Ike's wagon, with Ike swaying tipsily on the seat. And now a man wheeling a wheel-barrow. But he did not pass, after all. He turned aside, and deposited his laden barrow and himself under a tree near Terry.

He ate his lunch, and eyed Terry, Shep and Duke.

"How'll you trade?" he asked. That was the customary challenge.

"No trade," answered Terry, promptly. "Are you going clear to Pike's Peak with a wheel-barrow?"

"Yes, sir. I'll push across. I've got the best outfit of anybody. Only my own mouth to feed, and don't need to look for grass. When I make a dry camp I'm the only sufferer. I can set my own gait, too—can cover twenty miles a day. Well, my name's McGrew. What's your name? Where you from, where'd you get that buffalo, who's with you, and what trail do you calculate on taking?"

He seemed to be a very cheerful, plucky man, and Terry replied in fashion as friendly.

"My name's Terry Richards. My partner's Harry Revere—he's the same as a brother. We're from up

the Big Blue. This buffalo is half cow; I caught him when I was hunting with the Delawares; his name is Duke. We're thinking of taking the Republican trail."

"Oh, you're the boys from the Big Blue, are you? I might have guessed. I've heard about you."

"Have you?" responded Terry, curious.

"Yes. Sol Judy rode through last night and told me to keep an eye out for you; but you seem able to take care of yourselves, all right, judging from your little set-to with that whiskey peddler. I only wish the shot had gone lower, but the chances are he'll empty his barrel himself before he gets to the diggin's."

"Which trail do you think you'll follow?" asked Terry, in turn.

The wheel-barrow man scratched his head.

"I travel light. Believe I'll tackle the Smoky Hill route, straight west from Riley. It's shortest. Sol favors the Republican, on account of the stages. The majority of the people are going by the Smoky, though, or by the Santa Fe Trail—except those who are already striking the Republican farther to the north of us. The California and Oregon Trail, up along the Platte, of course will be the main trail."

Harry returned with a sack of flour, a side of salt pork or sow-belly, some sugar and coffee and beans, matches, a hatchet, and a few other articles. His arms were filled, and Jenny was almost covered, much to her disgust. She hee-hawed at Duke, and Duke stared wonderingly through his matted forelock.

"Best I could do," hailed Harry. "Never saw such a mob. The stores are near cleaned out. I couldn't

get picks or spades for love or money, but I reckon we can find them at the other end, or maybe at Junction City beyond Riley."

"Well, I'll see you boys at the diggin's," spoke the wheel-barrow man, rising and grasping the handles of his barrow. And away he trudged, to skirt the procession on the dust-enveloped road.

"He says he's going to try the Smoky Hill trail," informed Terry, "because it's shorter."

"It may do for him," answered Harry. "But the more haste the less speed, for some of the rest of us. I believe we'd better take Sol's advice, and break our trail across to the Republican until the stages catch up with us."

CHAPTER IV

THE TRAIL GROWS LONESOME

FORT RILEY was fifteen miles west. Progress was slow, on the crowded road, and at six o'clock the "Pike's Peak Limited" was glad to draw aside out of the dust and camp for the night near to a wagon labeled "Litening Express." The owner was a heavy, round-faced German, with a family of buxom wife, and of six girls ranging from big to little. He had a chicken coop, a large cook stove set up for the evening meal, a feather mattress, and an enormous bale of gunny-sacks that formed a seat for him while he watched the supper-getting.

Harry and Terry called easy greeting, and pretty soon he strolled over.

"Iss dat a wild boof'lo?" he queried.

"He was wild once, but he's tame now."

"You are de boys who made dot man loose his whiskey, mebbe."

"I guess we are," laughed Harry. It was astonishing, the speed with which news traveled among the overlanders.

"Dot was a goot t'ing. How far you say to dose gold mines, already?"

"'Bout six hundred miles. What are you doing with all those sacks?"

"I t'ink I poot my gold in dem, an' bring it back home."

"That'll be quite a load, won't it?" smiled Harry. "You know gold weighs mighty heavy."

"I haf a goot team," replied the German, not at all worried. "I fill my sacks, an' poot dem in my wagon, an' I come home in time for winter, an' den I am rich. I will be one of de richest men in Illinois. Mebbe next year I do it over."

"A very fine plan," remarked Harry, gravely. And the German returned to his own fire, much satisfied.

"Jiminy! Is that the way?" blurted Terry, suddenly excited again. "We ought to've brought sacks."

"We've a sack of oats and a sack of flour, and I wouldn't trade 'em for his sacks of gold—yet," retorted Harry.

This night the flickering camp-fires of the other gold-seekers twinkled all along the road. Fiddles were tuned up, to play "Monkey Musk," "My Old Kentucky Home," "Yankee Doodle," and other tunes, and voices joined in. What with the playing and singing, the barking of dogs and the noises from cattle, sleep was difficult except for persons as tired as were the "boys from the Big Blue."

At Fort Riley, which was a new army post, with massive stone buildings, near the juncture of the Smoky Hill River from the west and the Republican River from the north, here forming the Kansas River, the number of outfits lessened. Some struck north,

some took a short cut south for the Santa Fe Trail at the Arkansas River.

At Junction City, beyond, the last of the white settlements, the route of the remaining "Pike's Peak Pilgrims" again split. The main portion of the travelers seemed to favor the new trail straight westward, up along the Smoky Hill River, and on they toiled, to "get rich in a hurry." It was the common report that the Smoky Hill River could be followed clear to the mountains, but this, as Harry and Terry afterward heard, proved untrue.

Another portion turned off southward, for the Santa Fe Trail again. A good government road led down to it. Only a few had decided upon attempting the newest trail of all: that to the northwest, for the Republican by way of the divide between the Solomon River on the left and the Republican, far on the right.

"We're on our way," tersely remarked Harry, as the "Pike's Peak Limited" left Junction City for the unknown. "It's liable to be lonesome, till the stages come."

However, several wagons had preceded; and this first night camp was made at a creek, and close to another party also camped.

"Whar you boys from?" That was the first question.

"Do you calkilate to get thar with a buffalo and a yaller mule?" That was the second question.

"How'll you swap dogs?" That was the third question.

And—"Do you figger on diggin' out your pound of

gold a day?" was the fourth question. For Eastern papers had asserted that this was the regular output of the Pike's Peak country: a pound of gold a day to each miner!

"Half a pound a day will suit us," responded Harry.

"Dearie me!" sighed the woman—a nice, motherly woman, the sight of whom imbued Terry with a little sense of homesickness. "We-all count on a pound a day for one hundred days, so as to buy a farm back in Missouri. Maybe, if the children and I dig, we can raise it to two pounds a day. That'll be two hundred pounds, which is a right smart amount of money."

Junction City having been put behind, now there was not even a cabin to be seen. The high plain between the valley of the Solomon on the south and the valley of the Republican on the north stretched wide and unoccupied save by the squads of antelope, the scant trees marking the creek courses, and the scattered white-canvased wagons ambling on.

It was a go-as-you-please march. Outfits wandered aside, seeking better trail or better camping-spot. Occasionally one had broken down, and was halted for repairs or rest. Already the chosen route was dotted with cast-off articles, abandoned to lighten the loads. Bedsteads, trunks, mattresses, chairs—and Harry, pointing, cried:

"There's the 'Lightning Express' stove!"

For the German's heavy cook-stove reposed, by itself, on the prairie—and odd enough it looked, too.

"Wish we'd come to his feather tick, some evening," quoth Terry.

Fuel, even buffalo chips (which were the dried deposits left by the buffalo, and burned hotly) were scarce. The "Limited" aimed to camp each evening at a creek, if possible, where trees might be found; but most of the dead wood had been used by other travelers, or by Indians, and the green willow and ash smudged. The sage and greasewood burned well, but burned out very quickly.

Duke and Jenny footed steadily, making their twelve and fifteen miles a day, up and down, into draws and out again, and the "Limited" seemed to be gradually forging ahead. For a time, each night camp might be established (a very simple matter) in company with other pilgrims; and the spectacle of the half-buffalo and the yellow mule pulling in, or already waiting, invariably excited the one conversation.

"How far to Pike's Peak, strangers?"

"Five hundred miles or so, yet, I guess," would answer Harry, politely.

"It's an awful long trail, this way, ain't it? How far to the Republican?"

"That I can't say."

Then the outfits would exchange travel notes and personal history.

But the trail was petering out, as Harry expressed, more and more, as the creeks were being headed, and anxious gold-seekers swerved aside looking for the Republican Valley and better water.

About noon one day a giant, solitary tree waited before. Several wagon-tracks led for it, and Duke and Jenny followed of their own accord. It was a big

cottonwood, with half the bark stripped from its trunk by lightning.

"A store of good wood, there," remarked Harry. "Wonder why nobody's chopped it down."

"It's got a sign on it," exclaimed Terry. "See?" And—" 'Pike's Peak Post Office,' " he read, aloud.

The sign was plain; and presently the reason of the sign was plain. On the white surface of the peeled trunk was scrawled a number of names and other words.

"Pike's Peak or Bust!"

Underneath: "Busted! No wood, no water, no gold. Boston Party."

Also:

"Keep to the north."

"Climb this tree and you won't see anything."

"The jumping-off place."

"The Peoria wagon. All well."

"Bound for the Peak, are you?"

" 'Litening Express'!" announced Harry. "Our German friend is still ahead."

" 'Mr. Ike Chubbers'!" spelled out Terry, with difficulty. "Aw, shucks! He's this far already."

"Yes, and there he went!" laughed Harry, gleefully. "Those are sure his tracks. He's sampling his barrel."

And by token of a weaving, wobbling, sort of drunken pair of wagon-wheel tracks that made a wide swing for the north, Pine Knot Ike evidently had continued in a new direction.

"He's hunting the Republican," agreed Terry. "Hope we don't run into him."

"Nope," declared Harry. "Once is enough. Hurrah!" he uttered. And he read: " 'Stage line here. Sol Judy.' "

"That's so." And Terry peered. "But I don't see the line. Wonder which way he went. There's a double arrow, pointing both ways. Wonder if it's his. Wonder when he wrote here. If somebody hadn't written on top of him with charcoal, a fellow might tell."

"Anyway, we won't turn off yet," declared Harry. "And if we stand here 'wondering' we won't get anywhere at all. He said to keep northwest by the high ground. Maybe that wagon track ahead is the Lightning Express. We'll keep going. Gwan, Duke! Jenny!"

"Sort of wish we'd gone by the Smoky Hill, don't you?" ventured Terry. "We'd had more company."

"When we strike the Republican we'll find plenty company," asserted Harry. "This *is* getting rather lonesome, I must confess."

Not a moving object was in sight. The "Pike's Peak Post Office" tree stood here all by itself, as if waiting for the stages. And yet, Terry well knew (unless the sights at Manhattan had been a dream), north and south of them thousands of people were trooping, trooping westward in long, human rivers of creaking wagons.

He and Harry gave a last look behind and on either side, searching the brushy expanse for other outfits; then they left the friendly cottonwood and headed westward again, in the tracks of the wagon before. But suddenly Harry stopped.

"Pshaw! We forgot." And he limped hastily back to the tree. With his pencil he wrote on it. Of course! Terry returned to see.

"The Pike's Peak Limited. April 20, 1859. All well," announced this latest inscription.

"Somebody will read it," quoth Harry. "It'll show we got this far ourselves." And they returned, better satisfied, to the cart.

"There's one thing sure," continued Harry: "The less company we have, the more fuel and forage we'll find. We're getting into the buffalo country, too. See?"

For the surface of the ground was cut deeply by narrow trails like cattle trails, but made by buffalo wending probably from water to water. Some of the trails had been freshly trodden.

"That means we'll have to look sharp after Duke and Jenny," warned Terry.

They proceeded.

"Well, here come a party," remarked Harry. "But they're going the wrong way."

"Maybe it's some of the stage line surveyors."

The party, of three men, two of them horseback and one of them muleback, drew on at trot and rapid walk. The men were bearded, roughly dressed, and well armed with revolvers and rifles. Meeting the Pike's Peak Limited, they halted. So Harry and Terry halted.

"Howdy?"

"Howdy yourselves. Where you bound?"

"For the land of gold," cheerfully answered Harry.

"Land o' nothin'!" rebuffed the spokesman of the party. "Turn back, turn back, 'fore you starve to death."

"Why? Are you from the Pike's Peak mines?"

"We're from the Cherry Creek diggin's, young feller, but we didn't see any mines there nor nowheres else. It's all a fake, and we're on our way to tell the people so and save 'em their bacon."

"Aren't you bringing any gold?" exclaimed Terry. "Have you been there long?"

"Long! Gold!" And he turned his pocket inside out. "That's the size of your elephant. We've been there since last November, sonny, and the gold is in your eye. That Pike's Peak craze is the biggest hoax ever invented. It's just a scheme of a few rascals to sell off town lots. They want to get people to come out yonder; and gold is the only thing that'll persuade 'em into the barrenest, porest country on the face of the 'arth. We've been thar, so we know. We couldn't get out, in the winter; but everybody's leavin' now, to tell the folks along all the trails to face back and go home."

Terry felt a sinking of the heart. Harry also seemed to sober.

"What gold is it that's been sent out of there, then?" he asked.

"Californy gold! Fetched through from Californy. Never was taken out of that Pike's Peak country at all. Californy gold, used to fool the people with, back in the States."

"But my father brought home two hundred dollars

in gold, and he found it there somewhere, himself—near Pike's Peak," argued Terry, with sudden thought. "We've already got a mine!"

"He did, did he? Waal, if he did he was lucky, and he was luckier to get out with it. Thar may be a little gold—thar's gold to be washed from 'most any mountain stream, but you can't eat gold. Yon country's a freezin' country and a starvation country and an Injun country, fit for neither civilized man nor beast. The government'll need to step in and forbid people goin' to it. The hull of it ain't wuth an east Kansas acre."

"All right. Much obliged," said Harry. "So long."

"Goin' on?"

"We'll try a piece farther," said Harry. "How's the trail ahead? Did you see any stage line stakes?"

"Stage line stakes! What you dreamin' of? That stage idee is another hoax. You'll find that out, together with a few other things. But if you're *set* on bein' a pair of young fools, *go* on. We haven't more time to waste with you."

And forthwith the party spurred on its eastward way.

"Look out for Injuns," called one, over his shoulder.

"Humph!" mused Harry. "Doesn't sound very encouraging, but we can't believe everything we hear, for and against, both. If we did, we'd never know *what* to do. A fellow has to act on his own hook, sometimes, until he can judge by his own experience, where he can't depend on the experience of others. That

party may have secret reasons for talking so." He eyed Terry. "Shall we go on, clear through? I don't think a few discouragements will turn the wheel-barrow man back."

"I don't, either!" declared Terry, bracing. "Let's go on."

"Duke! Jenny! Hep with you!" responded Harry. "Hurrah for the Pike's Peak Limited, and maybe the Lightning Express, too! But no German with a wife and six girls and a feather bed shall beat this outfit. We're liable to come on a stake, any time. And the next will be only a few miles, and the next another few miles, and at that rate we'll hit the Republican River smack."

But to Terry, surveying the monotonous, empty landscape, single stakes planted maybe days' journeys apart seemed rather small landmarks.

In mid-afternoon they did indeed overtake the "Litening Express." It was halted beside a small, stagnant water-hole, as if making early camp. The wife and the six girls were sitting around, in disconsolate manner, and the German himself was soaking his naked feet in the water.

"What's the matter here?" hailed the cheerful Harry. "Broken down? You're pointing the wrong way."

For that was so. The one wagon track beyond had doubled, and the wagon, from which the team had been unspanned, was heading east instead of west.

"Yah," stolidly answered the German. "We go back. Dere iss no elephant. Now we go back again home quick. We haf met some men who haf told us."

"Oh, pshaw!" uttered Harry. "You're half-way. Better go the rest of the way and see for yourself. You mustn't let a few wild rumors stop you."

"Don't you intend to fill your sacks?" added Terry.

"Dere iss no gold, so dey say; an' notting else," insisted the German.

"Once you believed there was, and now you believe there isn't," laughed Harry. "You might as well believe the first as the second, as far as you know."

"And there is gold, because we've got a mine," encouraged Terry.

"Nein." And the German shook his head. "I set out to fill my sacks; dose men say I cannot fill dem. So I go home. I t'ink you better go home, too. You camp here with us, an' I fix my feet, an' we haf a goot supper, an' den in mornin' we travel togedder."

"Nope, we're bound through," replied Harry. "This is no time of day for us to camp." And Terry was relieved to hear him say so, for the stagnant pool, with the German's feet in it, did not look very inviting. "What did you find ahead?"

"Notting an' nobody," grumbled the German. "All joost like dis." And he swept his arm around to indicate the bare stretch of plains. "Purty soon you see where I turn to go home, an' den you be all by yourself. I do not like it. I like peoples. So I go home."

"You didn't see any stake, did you?" queried Terry.

"What stake?"

"To mark the stage line."

"What for would dey poot any stage line where dey ain't peoples?" demanded the German.

"All right; how'll you sell your mining tools?" asked Harry, with alert mind. "You've no use for them."

"Mebbe I dig garden. But I sell dem to you for one dollar an' half—de whole lot."

"Done!" cried Harry. "And how about those sacks?"

"Dey iss goot potato sacks. But what will you gif me for dose sacks?"

"Four bits."

"Well, I guess you take dem. You t'ink to poot potatoes in dem? Nein, nein; you iss crazy. It iss as crazy as to t'ink to poot gold in dem."

When they left the German, who had resumed the soaking of his sore feet in the general pool, they were possessed of two new picks, two new spades, a cask of sauerkraut, and the bale of sacks.

"What'll we ever do with the sacks?" inquired Terry.

Harry scratched his long nose.

"Blamed if I know, yet," he admitted. "But you never can tell."

In about an hour they passed the place where the "Litening Express" had turned about. Now there was no trail at all, except the endless buffalo trails. Somewhere they had lost even the hoof-prints of the three horsemen.

They made late and solitary evening camp on the farther side of a deep creek bed, whose banks had been broken down by crossing buffalo. There was so little water that Terry had to dig a hole, in order to get a pailful for supper and breakfast. But in wander-

ing about searching for buffalo chips in the gloaming, he shouted gladly:

"Here's a stake—a new one! It says: 'Station 11'!"

Harry limped to inspect.

"Bully!" he enthused. "We don't care where the other ten are. This shows we're on the right road. Well, Mr. Station Master, I want supper and beds for two, and a guide to the next station. What's the tariff, and what'll you trade for sauerkraut and gunny-sacks? But I wish your company'd make your stations a little bigger, for this is a powerful big country."

However, tiny as it was, the stake appealed as a human token. There were signs, also, of an old camp, near the creek; and from the stake hoof-marks led away westward, as if to the next stake.

CHAPTER V

TOUGH LUCK FOR THE LIMITED

"I SUPPOSE," reflectively drawled Harry, in the morning at breakfast, "that by the looks of things we're in for a dry march or two before we strike the creeks on the other side. Anyway, we'd better fill the water keg, sure. And I opine you're to go ahead, to keep those horse tracks, while I follow with the cart."

"Pike's Peak or Bust," responded Terry.

They started early, to push on at best speed. Duke grunted, Jenny sighed, the cart creaked, Harry whistled, Shep scouted before and on either hand, sniffing at the buffalo trails and charging the prairie dogs and little brown birds, and Terry, trudging in the advance, faithfully kept to the hoof-prints.

Perhaps the Pike's Peak pilgrims who had turned off had been wise, for the water certainly was failing. Now there were only a few shallow washes, and these were dry as a bone, showing that the top of the low prairie divide was being crossed. Still, with a full water keg, which would give several good drinks to all, and with the horse tracks to follow, and the Republican side of the divide somewhere ahead, there was no cause for worry.

Duke and Jenny stepped valiantly. Terry felt a pride in the thought that the Pike's Peak Limited was the first overland outfit on the new stage trail. He wondered if they would beat the wheel-barrow man in to the diggin's. Maybe they would! He wondered when they would sight the mountains. Tomorrow? No, scarcely tomorrow. The horizon ahead was a complete half-circle, broken by never an up-lift. In fact, 'twas hard to believe that any mountains at all lay in that direction.

At noon Harry guessed that they had covered ten miles, and he figured on covering another ten miles before evening camp. He was anxious to reach the next water. The cart was not much of a drag, and both Duke and Jenny were strong. So at the noon camp everybody had a little drink, and Duke and Jenny had a little grass, and a little doze. Shep snored. A good dog, Shep.

"It's queer how little game we've seen, except measley rabbits," observed Harry, that evening. "Only some antelope, and one old buffalo bull at a distance."

"And no Indians, either," added Terry.

"Well, expect the Indians are with the buffalo or else begging along the main trails," reasoned Harry. "But we'd better hobble both animals short, anyway, so they won't stray off looking for water."

The sun had set gloriously in a clear and golden west. While camp was being located in the open, the broad expanse of rolling plain quickly empurpled; and in the twilight Terry staked out Duke, by a rope and a strap around his fore-leg, and Jenny by a rope around

her neck. When supper was finished, and the dishes scoured with twigs to save the water, the first stars had appeared in the sky.

Just before closing his eyes to sleep, Terry from his buffalo robe gazed up and sighed contentedly. It was a fine night.

The coyotes and the larger wolves seemed unusually busy. Their yaps and howls sounded frequently. Several times during the night Terry was conscious that Shep growled, and that Duke and Jenny were uneasy; he heard also a low rumble, as of distant thunder, but he was too sleepy to sit up and look about. When he did unclose his eyes, to blink for a moment, he saw that the stars were still vivid in the blue-black sky overhead.

This was the last thought—and next he awakened with a start, to pink dawn and Harry's ringing shout:

"Buffalo! Great Scott! Look at the buffalo!"

Harry was up, standing near the cart and gazing to the east. Up sprang Terry, too, and gazed. The rumble was distinct. A miracle had occurred between darkness and dawn—all the plain to the east was black with a living mass which had flowed upon it during the night.

Buffalo!

"I should say!" gasped Terry.

"Must be ten thousand of them," called Harry.

"Look out for Jenny and Duke!"

Jenny was snorting, as the morning breeze bore the reek of the vast herd to her nostrils. No, mules did not like buffalo. Duke's head was high, as he stared.

Harry had partially dressed; now he hurried to quiet the team. Terry drew on his trousers and boots and hastened after.

The buffalo were grazing, and seemed to be drifting slowly this way. The hither fringe was not a quarter of a mile from the camp. Bulls bellowed and pawed and rolled, calves gamboled and breakfasted, and around the mass prowled great gray buffalo wolves, waiting their chances. All was wondrously clear in the first rays of the rising sun.

Harry led the restive Jenny to the wagon and tied her short.

"I think we'd better get right out of here," he announced, as he helped Terry and Shep drive the equally restive Duke in. "The coast ahead is clear. But if we wait for breakfast or anything, that herd's liable to be on top of us."

"Let's hustle, then," agreed Terry. "They're coming this way, sure. I heard 'em, in the night, but I didn't know what it was."

"Same here," confessed Harry, as they hustled to put Duke and Jenny to the cart, and pitch the camp stuff inside. "Funny where such a mob rose from. Reckon something set 'em traveling."

Jenny was quite ready to leave, but Duke was more reluctant. However, on started the Pike's Peak Limited again.

"We'll stop for breakfast when we're at a safer distance," quoth Harry. "Hope we reach water tonight."

Yes, the great herd was perceptibly nearer when they pulled out. But at the rate it was moving it

could be left behind while it peacefully grazed. The thin brush was a-sparkle with scant dew, soon dried by the bright sun. The hoof-prints of the second horseman party showed plainly in the sod and sandy gravel. Terry acted as guide, Harry, following with the cart, urged on Duke and Jenny.

"Reckon we'll come to another stake today," called back Terry.

"Reckon we will," answered Harry.

The rumble of the herd gradually died. The sun mounted higher, and Terry was thinking upon breakfast, when a sudden hail from Harry halted him.

"Wait! Listen!"

Harry had stopped.

"Whoa!" And Duke and Jenny stopped, not at all unwillingly.

Terry stopped, poised. Another dull rumble! More buffalo? Nothing was in sight before or on either hand. The rumble came from behind—and yonder, against the sun, welled a cloud of dust.

"They've stampeded!" he cried.

"Sounds like it. And the question is, which way are they going?"

That was speedily answered.

"Gee whillikens!" exclaimed Terry. "They're coming this way!"

A swell of the prairie had concealed all save the dust; but now atop the swell had appeared black dots, succeeded instantly by a long wave of solid black, as over and down surged the whole herd, covering the back trail and pouring on with astonishing, not to say

alarming rapidity. The flanks extended widely; there was no time for escaping to one side or the other. In fact, the cart seemed to be right in the middle of the broad path.

Harry acted quickly.

"Watch the animals!" he ordered. "I'll tend to this end. Don't lose your head, Terry. We can split 'em."

He limped to the rear of the wagon. Terry ran back to Duke—and saw that Harry had jerked the shot-gun from where it was stowed, and was posted out behind the wagon. The crowded ranks of the buffalo were so close that the earth trembled. Jenny trembled, also, and Duke was pawing and staring sideways. Shep, barking wildly, took refuge underneath the wagon.

Terry seized the whip, dropped by Harry, and threatened Duke from before.

"Steady, Duke! Jenny! Whoa! Whoa, now!"

"Steady, everybody!" yelled Harry, above the uproar. The stampeding herd was upon them. Three or four of the fleetest cows raced past, galloping, heads low, little tails cocked, with the peculiar rolling motion of the running buffalo; and close after pressed the whole mass—a crowded frontage of thundering hoofs, shaggy heads, bulging eyes, lolling tongues, huge shoulders lunging, lion-like manes tossing, and slim, smooth hind-quarters bobbing up and down. And back from the front rank, these were all mixed together—solid!

Terry's heart beat wildly. An instant more, and——! Why, the cart outfit was only a speck in the path of this darkly rushing avalanche which would

swallow them all in a jiffy and never know; would mash them flat!

He caught his breath, while trying to quiet Duke and Jenny. There was no use in running away—Harry stood braced—how small he looked—but he was plucky—and now he actually ran forward, a few steps, right against the onward plunging rank—waved his hat—shouted—and bang! bang! warned the shot-gun, belching its challenge into the buffalos' faces.

"Duke! Jenny! Whoa!" shrieked Terry, desperately—and now gladly, for another miracle had occurred. The foremost buffalo, as if suddenly aware of the cart, and the human beings, had veered aside, to right and left, avoiding Harry, and the cart, and all; and following their leaders, to right and left were veering the others, here at the middle, so that the divided herd began to stream past in a heaving, jostling current, on either hand. It had been split, by Harry; and the Pike's Peak Limited was an island.

Harry continued to yell and wave his hat and arms. He stood there fearlessly, at the split. At first the split was narrow—Terry almost could touch the shaggy forms as they lurched by. He started to yell and wave, also, and help widen the split—for it did widen—but speedily he had to quit. Duke and Jenny were nervous enough already. Jenny snorted, reared; Duke shook his head and strained from side to side.

"Duke! Whoa! Steady, boy! Back, Jenny!"

The pounding of the incessant hoofs was like the long-roll of a great drum. Thick rose the dust, but not so much from the earth as from the big hairy

bodies, to which had clung dried dirt. Bulls, cows, and calves; cows, calves, and bulls—forming a stifling, living lane of constant motion.

Terry scarcely could hear himself.

"Duke! Whoa, boy! Steady, there! Whoa, Jenny!"

Would the herd never be past? Yes, yonder it was thinning—and farther beyond, the stragglers were in sight. Good!

"Duke! Be careful, Duke!" He was growing more unmanageable. Terry danced before him, and threatened. "Whoa, Jenny! Whoa, Duke!" And—"Duke! Duke! DUKE! Whoa-oa! DUKE!" But no use; with shake of angry head and flirt of wickedly cocked tail Duke bolted; dragged Jenny and the cart together, knocked Terry sprawling—Terry clutched vainly at the cart, was dragged, himself, a few feet, staggered up, hatless, stumbled on the frightened Shep, and gazed after with a wail: "Oh, jiminy!"

They were away, in the dusty wake of the flying herd: Duke galloping, Jenny galloping, the cart bounding.

Harry had turned just in time to witness. His sweat-streaked face gaped, amazed, perplexed, and hardened into sudden resolution as whirling he sprang forward. But Terry was as quick. Grabbing up his hat as he went, he launched in the pursuit. Out-stripping him, Shep ran furiously, barking, and Harry kept close behind.

The cart was plainly visible, in an open place among the stragglers at the rear of the herd. Duke lumbered, Jenny lumbered, the cart lumbered, and holding to the

chase lumbered in their heavy boots Terry and Harry.

Soon it was evident that a harnessed buffalo was no match for free buffalo. Duke's outfit was being left; buffalo after buffalo passed it, until presently Duke and Jenny and the cart were traveling alone. But they kept going, on a stampede of their own, imitating the insensate herd.

"Darn that Duke!" panted Terry. And he shouted: "Sic', Shep! Turn 'em! Sic', sic'! Catch 'em, boy!"

Shep darted gaily. He fairly tore through the brush. Now he had reached the cart—and now he was barking alongside the crazy team. Would he do it? *Could* he do it? Yes, he was trying to head them. He had gained the front; yapping, darting, snapping, he was crossing back and forth before Duke's nose. Down lower dropped Duke's burly head; he charged; Shep dodged, and returned.

The cart swung and tilted, and out was bounced the cask of sauerkraut.

"Hurrah!" cheered Harry.

On at a tangent lumbered Duke and Jenny—Shep was bothering them seriously—and out bounced the water keg.

"Great Scott!" gasped Harry. "Don't let's lose that keg!"

"Shep'll stop 'em! Shep'll stop 'em!" panted Terry. "Hurrah!" His throat was tight, his heart thumped tremendously, his legs were like lead, but he had hopes.

Shep knew his business of turning cattle. Now wherever the enraged and frantic Duke headed, the pesky, yapping, snapping dog was under his nose.

Jenny was growing tired of being dragged hither-thither; she detested dogs, and she despised buffalo, tame or wild. Duke, at his wits' end, and tired also, stopped short; she stopped; Duke pawed and shook his locks and rumbled, keen yet for just one good chance at his tormentor—and Shep, sitting down, with tongue dripping, held the way.

There they were when, breathless, Terry and Harry arrived, to scold the runaways, to praise Shep, and to take stock of damages.

"Not a thing broken, is there?" pronounced Harry, still panting, after the hasty survey.

And that appeared to be the case. Of course, the stuff inside the cart was pretty well jumbled; but the frame and wheels seemed all right, and the harness was whole, and only Duke and Jenny themselves were the worse for wear. Their drooping heads and heaving flanks proclaimed that they had run quite far enough.

So, thought Terry, had he and Harry. He felt as though he had run a mile or more. Whew!

"All's well that ends well," asserted Harry, regaining his spirits. Nothing downed Harry. "Now, first thing to do is to get that keg of water. But I don't suppose we'll ever find the trail. The buffalo must have tramped it out—and we're away off the track, anyway. Shucks!"

"Where is the keg?" asked Terry, peering.

"There it is—that first dot. See? The gunny sacks are beyond, and the sauerkraut last. Let's turn the critters about. You bring them on and I'll go ahead. Maybe something else was jounced out."

Duke and Jenny were turned, after considerable shouting and shoving; Harry set off on a straight line for the keg, and Terry followed more slowly with the team and cart. It did seem rather tough luck that they had lost the horsemen's trail to the next stake; now they'd simply have to guess at direction, unless they happened to be near the stage line and a stage came.

Golly, but he was thirsty! His mouth was glued. He hoped that they all—that is, Harry and he and Shep—would get a good drink from that keg. As for Duke and Jenny, they did not deserve a drink, although doubtless they needed one. And what about something to eat?

Harry was waiting at the keg, a queer look on his perspiring, grimy face. He had set the keg on end.

"Thirsty?" he queried.

"Thirsty's no name for it," panted Terry.

"So am I. But we'll have to go easy. The bung flew out of the keg, and half the water's followed. I found the bung, but I can't find the water."

Harry evidently tried to speak lightly, but Terry read concern in his tone and face both.

"Can you stand a short drink?" encouraged Harry. "There'll be plenty on ahead somewhere."

"Sure," declared Terry, manfully, feeling thirstier than ever. "We've got a little, haven't we? And if we strike that trail maybe it'll lead us to a creek."

So they hoisted in the keg, tightly stoppered again (but it was suspiciously light), and Harry trudged ahead once more, to find the gunny sacks.

"We'll never mind the sauerkraut," he called back. "Let it stay. The lighter we travel, the better, from here to water."

Shep went with him. They dipped into a shallow, narrow draw; Terry heard Shep barking, and then Harry hallooing. And when, urging Duke and Jenny, he could see into the draw, Harry was there, at one side, beckoning and shouting to him, and at the same time examining some object on the ground.

"Haw, Duke! Haw! Hep with you!" Along the shallow draw they toiled, for he was afraid to leave the team.

Harry was kneeling, Shep was nosing and busily waving his tail. They were engaged over that object. It could not be the gunny sacks. The gunny sacks had not rolled so far from the back trail.

"Whoa-oa, Duke, Jenny! Stand, now!" And Terry trudged a few steps to join the investigation. He stopped short, astounded.

Harry and Shep had found a man—no, looked more like a boy; lying crumpled and motionless in a little saucer-shaped hollow amidst the brush.

"Say! Is he dead?" gasped Terry.

"No. Hasn't even been stepped on, I think," answered Harry. "But he needs food and water mighty bad—'specially water. Open the keg, quick."

"TERRY FLEW TO THE CART . . . FLEW BACK AGAIN WITH THE PRECIOUS FLUID"

CHAPTER VI

JUST IN TIME

TERRY flew to the cart, wrestled with the keg until he might pour from it, and lavishly plashing a tin cup full, even to running over, flew back again.

Harry sopped his handkerchief and mopped the upturned face of the cast-away; trickled a few drops, now and then, in between the cracked, parted lips; wet the thin wrists. Skin and lips seemed to absorb water like a dry sponge.

The unconscious refugee was small and exceedingly thin; he could not be over eighteen or nineteen at the most. He wore coarse shoes and trousers, and a flannel shirt open at the chest. Harry wet the white chest. Terry and Shep watched expectantly.

"He must be a stray from some pilgrim outfit," remarked Harry. "Got lost. Expect he tried to strike across country by himself, and had no food or water. Queer that the buffalo didn't harm him. They went right over him."

And that was so. All the brush, save in this oasis, was crushed, and the ground was stamped and furrowed by the myriad plunging hoofs. But somehow they had leaped the little hollow, or avoided it.

"Did you find him?" asked Terry.

"No; Shep found him. More water, please." And Harry passed up the emptied cup.

When Terry returned with it filled again, a change had occurred in their patient. His eyes were fluttering, and he was feebly moving his bony hands. He greedily gulped for the water, and even tried to seize the cup when Harry removed it. Some of the water flowed over his face, but some of it was swallowed.

Terry hated to see any of it wasted on the ground. He was thirsty himself; so were they all—Duke bawled hoarsely and Jenny essayed to beg, smelling water and asking for it.

The patient appeared to be attempting to speak—signed for more, more.

"A little at a time, a little at a time," repeated Harry. "You're all right. You're among friends, but you mustn't drink too much at once. Might make you sick. Another swallow? There you are."

The second cup was emptied. The patient was beginning to mutter thickly and seemed to be seeing—signed for more, more. A slight color tinged his smooth sunken cheeks.

"He's coming round," declared Harry. "Next thing is to get him out of this sun and into the cart. We can't stay here. Whew, this sun is hot! Watch him and shade him as much as you can, will you, while I fix things?"

Having fumbled inside the cart, away limped Harry, and returned lugging the bale of gunny sacks. He cut the binding with his knife, and opened the bale—

spread the sacks in the cart, for a bed, and leaping out with a buffalo robe, brought it to the hollow.

"Now let's put him on this and hoist him aboard."

That was done, Terry tugging from inside the cart and Harry lifting from outside. The sacks and the buffalo robe made a very comfortable, snug bed, and wedged the sides so as to hold the patient securely.

"Water," feebly implored a voice.

"One cup full, this time," granted Harry. "Drink slowly—slowly, now."

The boy clutched the cup with both hands, and Harry with difficulty prevented his draining it at a gulp. But having drained it, he sank back with a sigh.

"Ho, hum!" And Harry paused, to sigh too, and wipe his streaming face with his handkerchief. Duke and Jenny had their heads turned, expectantly; Shep was sitting, his tongue out, his eyes eager, likewise demanding a share from the keg. "I suppose we'll all have a small drink apiece, but we've got another mouth to supply."

"We won't have enough, will we?" anxiously asked Terry. "We hardly had enough before."

This did loom as tough luck: to have been limited in water anyway, then to have lost the trail, and to have lost part of the water, and to have used half of the valuable day in getting nowhere in particular, but in being made thirstier than ever, and now to have added still another thirsty mouth to the company. Of course——

"Never mind," asserted Harry. "Everything's all right. Don't you see—if the stampede hadn't come

Duke and Jenny wouldn't have run, and if they hadn't run, we might not have lost the trail, and if the things hadn't bounced out we wouldn't have back-tracked to gather them, and if we hadn't back-tracked, we would never have found the boy, and if he hadn't been found today, he'd have died, down there in that hollow. Now we'll all get through. We won't stop to eat, but Duke and Jenny will travel a little faster for a drink, and so will the rest of us. Half a cup for you, and half a cup for me, and half a pail for them, to wash the dust out of their throats, and a dozen laps for Shep. And one more cupful for our new partner, when he needs it."

"Well," said Terry, dubiously, "I don't know whether there's that much in the keg or not."

There was, and a swash left. The boy in the cart didn't understand. "Water! Water!" he kept begging, as the Pike's Peak Limited ("limited" indeed) again toiled on through the monotonous flatness, Harry guessing at the right direction and Terry trudging beside the rear wheels. That incessant cry for "water, water," grew rather annoying. The new boy already had had four cupfuls and probably'd get another! And every cupful counted now. But of course——!

"We must go on as far as we possibly can, before dark," had said Harry. "Or until we strike water, first."

When would that be? Duke and Jenny were sluggish on their feet, and frequently stumbled as they groaned along with their stringy tongues dangling. It

was slow work, and hot work, and awfully thirsty work—Terry wasn't certain that he could hold out much longer without another drink.

"Do we drink again pretty soon?" he stammered.

"I don't think we'd better, do you?" answered Harry, as if trying to speak cheerfully. "We've got to save some for Duke and Jenny, and our passenger. We can't get him through without them to haul him."

"Tha' so," agreed Terry, his mouth gluey. "Thasso."

"Yesh, thasso," encouraged Harry. "You an' I awright. We unnerstan'. They don't."

"Water! Water!" babbled the passenger. His voice was the clearest of any.

Trudge, trudge, creak, creak, over the dry plain, on for that quivering horizon which might contain water but never drew nearer. They did not know where they were going; they probably had passed another of the stage station stakes; bushy black Shep was lagging, Duke and Jenny stumbled, Harry limped doggedly, the passenger pleaded ever more faintly and piteously until Harry, halting abruptly, without a word grimly gave him half a dozen swallows; and when they resumed, Terry had decided that he'd rather have a drink, himself, than all the gold of Pike's Peak.

However, Harry took none; and so he didn't ask for one.

The sun was low, streaming into their faces, and dazzling and blinding. Soon it would set; soon they must stop; one spot would be as good as another, if they didn't come to water—and just how he was to

get through a dry night, following a dry day, Terry could not imagine—did not like to imagine, anyway.

That keg, when Harry had tilted it to give those few swallows to the passenger, had sounded alarmingly emptier than before. Water evaporated mighty fast on these plains.

Turning a moment, to shut the sun from his tortured eyes, now Terry saw something, quartering behind, on the right, which was the north. What? Antelope? No; too much dust. Antelope didn't raise such dust. Buffalo, then? More buffalo? Or Indians! No—and a wild hope surged into his heart and strengthened his voice, as he cried, to Harry:

"Harry! Hurrah! There's somebody else—another outfit!"

Harry, who had been plodding on, stopped to gaze; and instantly the exhausted Duke and Jenny stopped.

"Freighters," decided Harry. "Great Scott! Hurrah! Or maybe some of the stage-line people. We'll have to head 'em off and make 'em see us. Come on. Hurrah! Duke! Jenny! Gwan! Water! Water! Barrels of it—gallons of it!"

Duke and Jenny seemed to appreciate—they started gallantly.

"Gee—gee with you, Duke!" bade Harry, hobbling.

"Do you think they *will* have water?" panted Terry.

"Of course. But we'll have to catch 'em. Duke! Jenny! Hep!"

The dust cloud yonder had resolved itself into quite a large outfit, traveling briskly. There was a herd of animals—mules or horses; and two wagons following,

drawn each by four span; and several men afoot, and others horseback.

"They'll have to camp pretty soon. We'll come into 'em, if we keep going," encouraged Harry. And he added, suddenly: "Look at Jenny! She smells water. And so does Duke!"

For both Duke and Jenny were alertly stretching out—sniffing, tugging, trying to increase their pace. They almost trotted. Could they really smell water in barrels, away off there—or did they guess? At any rate, the two routes were drawing together.

The sun sank below the horizon, and a pleasant coolness flowed over the landscape. Now in the twilight the freighter outfit had halted, and bunched. Going to make camp? No—there it started again. Pshaw! But no—some of it had remained: not the wagons, but several of the loose stock, and two men, and a heap of stuff.

"Hurrah!" gasped Harry. "That's enough. Enough for us."

Duke and Jenny were trying to break into a gallop, and their owners had hard work to keep up. The party at the camp had seen them coming, and were pausing in their camp-making to stare. Now at a staggering lope and trot the Pike's Peak Limited fairly charged in—would have run right over the camp had not the two men there rushed out and waved their arms and shouted.

The camp was on the edge of a muddy creek course. That was what ailed Duke and Jenny; only by main force could they be held back.

"What's the matter? Plumb crazed?" scolded one of the men.

"Their critters are plumb crazed, don't you see?" reproved the other. "Unhook 'em and let 'em go, or they'll drag cart and all in."

Harry hustled, Terry hustled, the men helped—and on sprang Duke and Jenny, into the mud, into the water, to drink, and gulp, and drink again, and stand there, belly deep, soaking. Terry yearned mightily to join them, but Harry was more polite.

"Whar you from? You look nigh tuckered out, yourselves," accused one of the men.

"So we are," gasped Harry. "We're down to our last drop—we've a man aboard the cart who's worse off still—picked him up this morning. But I can't talk till I have a drink."

"Never mind the creek; it's too roily. We've a barrel full." And the other man promptly passed over a brimming dipper. Harry took it; his hand trembled.

"You first, Terry," he said.

Terry shook his head.

"We'll take turns," he proposed. "You drink and then I'll drink."

Ah, but that water, warmish and brackish, was good! Together they emptied the dipper, and at once emptied another—and by this time the two men had lifted the boy from the cart and were attending to him, also. He was too weak to talk, but he seemed to know, and smiled when he likewise had drained a dipper.

"Give him a little broth, later," grunted one of the

men. "He had a narrow squeak, I reckon. Mustn't overfeed him. We'll stew him some buff'ler meat. 'Xpec' you fellers are hungry, yourselves, by this time."

"Haven't eaten all day," laughed Harry, in spirits again. "But where are we? We're looking for the stage line, and the Republican."

"You aren't near the Republican yet, by a long shot. But this is a stage station, all right. Fust stages will be through tomorrow and after that two at a time every day, till the trail's well broken. We're part of the supply outfit. It drops some of us off every so far along the line, ahead of the stages, so we'll have meals and lodgin' and a change of mules ready. You needn't do much unpackin'; we've grub enough, and you can bunk with us and put that sick boy in the tent."

"Yes, and the stages'll take him on tomorrow," spoke the other man. "You'll have to lie by, anyhow. You can't start your critters out till after they've rested a bit. That's a great team you've got—a buffalo and a mule! Where you from?"

"The Big Blue," answered Terry.

"Oh! You're the boys from the Big Blue, are you? You're the ones who spilled Chubbers' whiskey."

So even they knew!

The station agent and his helper were a hospitable pair. Harry volunteered to attend to the cooking while they straightened the camp a little, for the night. The supply wagon had dumped off a tent, a stove, a barrel for water, a bale of hay, bedding, sacks and boxes

of provisions, several bunches of fire-wood, etc. The tent was erected, the rescued boy placed inside and given a little broth. He immediately went to sleep.

This was Station Twelve—a dinner station for the stages. The next station, Number Thirteen, about twenty-five miles farther on, was a night station. The stations would average about twenty-five miles apart, through this region, to the diggin's. Farther east, in the settlements, the stations were closer. One hundred stages and a thousand mules would be put on the run, at a cost of $800 a day. The company, Jones & Russell of Leavenworth, already had spent $300,000. The fare from Leavenworth to the mountains was $100 gold, and shorter trips were twenty-five cents a mile. Time to the mountains, twelve days—maybe less when the trail was well broken, and if the Indians didn't bother.

"Two stages travelin' together will hold off the Injuns," remarked the station agent.

"Heigh-ho!" drowsily yawned Harry, after dusk, from his blankets. "All's well that ends well—but I was getting a trifle worried."

He and Terry had decided to wait for the stages, and to let Duke and Jenny rest during at least half that next day. The fact is, they were willing to rest, themselves.

Toward noon the station men paused in their tasks, to gaze more and more frequently into the east.

"Thar they come," quietly informed one; and now all gazed, expectant.

"Right on time."

Upon the surface of the vast plains to the south of east had appeared a dot. It rapidly enlarged, and resolved into two dots, one behind the other. They were coming—they were coming: the first stage-coaches, sure enough; each drawn by four mules, driver on seat, other people on seat and roof, heads protruding from windows, mules at a gallop.

"Yes, sir-ee! On time to the minute."

Swaying and lurching and dust-enveloped, with creak of leather and sudden grind of brake-shoes, the leading stage slackened at the station, stopped abruptly, and setting the brake more securely the driver tossed his lines to the ground and in leisurely fashion descended. He was in slouch hat, white shirt-sleeves (or whitish, rather), yellow kid gloves and shiny boots. Somewhat of a dandy, he.

Another man swung down from the seat, after him; so did the passengers atop the coach, and those within piled out. The second coach arrived in like fashion.

The first coach was painted red, the second green; and both were gilt striped and bore, in gilt letters, the announcement: "Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express Company."

The station-agent's assistant bustled to unhitch the mules and put in fresh ones. The station agent served the dinner, of cold boiled buffalo meat, bread and coffee. The passengers ate out of doors, sitting on the boxes and a nail-keg.

One of the passengers who had ridden on top of the coach was a busy, inquiring man with a full brown beard and a blue eye and a long linen duster. After

he had eaten he walked over to Harry and Terry.

"I'm Henry Villard, from the Cincinnati *Commercial,*" he said, genially. "The station agent tells me that you boys have had quite an exciting experience on this new trail. Buffalo stampede, and a rescue, and all that. I'd like to hear about it and send it to my paper. It ought to make a good story."

The man who had occupied the seat with the driver also came over.

"A buffalo, a mule and a two-wheeled cart, eh?" he commented. "Well, I guess you'll make it, if you've got so far. But there are five thousand other pilgrims behind us, some with worse outfits than yours, and all pushing on by this same trail, to find the 'elephant.'"

Journalist Villard took notes; he even interviewed the boy in the tent. The boy was now able to talk. He said that his name was Archie Smith. He and two others had started from Ohio, to walk to the diggin's. They had tried to cut across north from the Smoky Hill trail and had got lost—and the last he remembered he was wandering alone, so weak from hunger and thirst that he had fallen down.

The man who had spoken of the five thousand pilgrims behind (his name was Beverly D. Williams, and he was the stage-line superintendent, on his initial tour of inspection), helped Archie into the red coach.

"All aboard!" summoned the drivers, climbing to their seats. The passengers hastily took their places. As the red coach started with a jump, from the window Archie waved his hand at Harry and Terry, and called again:

"Thanks. I owe you a lot. I'll see you at the mines. Don't forget. I'll see you at the mines."

With a jump the green coach started also. And away rolled, tugged by their galloping mules, the first stages for Pike's Peak, bearing Journalist Henry Villard of the Cincinnati *Commercial* and Superintendent Williams, and those passengers who, like Mr. Villard, were bent on discovering just how true the "elephant" stories were.

CHAPTER VII

SHEP DOES HIS DUTY

THE Pike's Peak Limited prepared to follow.

"Five thousand pilgrims! Did you hear that? All coming along behind!" exclaimed Terry, as he and Harry "hooked" the now rested Duke and Jenny to the cart. "These are new ones. He didn't say anything about the other trails."

"We heard how they were, before we left," reminded Harry. "And we saw a right smart smattering of folks at Manhattan, remember. Oh, I don't think we'll be lonesome."

"All you've got to do now is to follow the stage tracks," directed the station agent. "You'll come to stations every so often. But you'd best keep your water keg filled. There's no knowin' what'll happen on these plains."

"Yes, sir," concurred his helper. "And keep your weather eye peeled for Injuns. Don't let 'em bamboozle you or if they don't take your scalps they'll steal you blind. When Injuns come in, hang tight to your scatter-gun."

"Haven't seen any, so far," remarked Harry.

"No; but you can't tell. In my opinion that buff'lo

stampede was caused by Injuns—like as not that was why the buff'lo drifted down on you in the fust place. And if you hadn't got out when you did, in a hurry, you'd have had more trouble, plenty."

The stages had long since disappeared in the west, but the tracks were plain. Tomorrow there would be other stages, and the next day others, and so on, had said the station men; and before the Limited had even sighted the mountains some of these same stages would be met coming back. That made travel at a walk seem rather slow, especially when gold was waiting only to be found.

A second pair of stages passed them, with a swirl of dust and a cheer, late the next afternoon, but they found them spending the night at Station Thirteen, on the bank of another creek. Here they also camped.

"Twenty-five miles again," sighed Harry, satisfied. "We'll get there."

Duke and Jenny had indeed footed sturdily. The hurrying stages seemed to be an inspiration to them. They felt that they, also, were now going somewhere.

The coaches had been full. There were two women, who slept in the station tent. The men passengers slept on the ground, under a canopy of gunny sacking stretched over stakes. For their own comfort the station employees were digging a cave in the side of an arroyo or dry wash, where they might house themselves and cook, in bad weather. Could fight off the Indians from it, too, they said.

The talk among the passengers was mainly of buffalo, Indians and the other sights along the trail. The

Indians had been bothering the timid pilgrims considerably, with begging and stealing, but had not bothered the stages.

"We'll take no chances, though," declared the stage-driver. "Never let an Injun think you're afraid of him—that's the secret. Once start to give in, and you're lost. Most of these pilgrims never've had experience with the plains Injuns. They try to please 'em and buy their good-will by giving 'em something for nothing, and the Injuns don't understand. Giving something for nothing isn't Injun way. It amounts to being afraid. Why, we passed at least half a dozen outfits who'd been so good to the Injuns that they didn't have a critter left—every head driven off, some in broad daylight, and there the wagons were sitting. One wagon had said at first 'Pike's Peak or Bust,' and now it said, 'Busted, by Thunder!' "

"Must have been Kiowas or Cheyennes. The 'Rapahoes aren't ranging so far east, are they?" suggested the station agent.

"Oh, they're all ranging everywhere, now, following the buffalo and begging from the pilgrims," quoth the driver. "Kiowas, Cheyennes and 'Rapahoes—they're in cahoots. But I hear tell that the main band of the 'Rapahoes under old Little Raven are sticking 'round Cherry Creek, camped there on their winter grounds, along with the whites, instead of chasing the buffalo. It's easier."

The Pike's Peak Limited pulled out early, bent on making time and not be overtaken by those five thousand rivals who were still coming. In about an hour

and a half the stages passed at a gallop, while the drivers saluted with a flourish of whips. And the Limited proceeded to plod after.

Buffalo had become quite abundant. They were constantly in sight—large bunches and small; but Duke seemed to have had his fill of rampaging, and paid little attention to his kin-people. However, as Harry remarked, where there were buffalo, there likely were Indians.

"If any do come in on us," he said, "I'll grab the gun and you tend to Jennie. If there's one thing a mule hates worse than buffalo, it's Injun—and Jenny's powerful sensitive, poor thing."

"Maybe we ought to mount guard tonight," proposed Terry. "I'll sit up and then you sit up." Mounting guard for fear of Indian attack would be another fine story to tell to George Stanton.

"Not yet," decided Harry. "We'll stake Jenny in close, and she's awake all night anyway. At least, with her grunts and groans she sounds like it."

"I suppose Shep would make a racket, too."

"W-well," mused Harry, "I believe I'd rather trust to Jenny's ears and nose than to Shep's—there's more *of* them."

The buffalo before and on either side grazed peacefully; but about three o'clock that afternoon a commotion was evident behind. The buffalo were scampering, and afar on the trail appeared a little cloud of dust.

"Can't be another stage already, can it?" questioned Harry.

"Injuns!" exclaimed Terry. "But they wouldn't be raising dust, would they? Or maybe they're chasing a stage!"

Harry paled slightly.

"We'll soon see. But they won't get this outfit without a heap of trouble. We're going through to the diggin's."

However, it wasn't a stage. It was a light open wagon, drawn by two horses at a furious pace. Anybody might have thought that the horses were running away, except for the fact that a man on the seat was using the whip.

"Great snakes!" ejaculated Harry. "We'll have to clear the track. Gee, Duke! Jenny! Gee! Gee-up! Whoa-oa!"

He turned out just in time. The on-comers were in a tearing hurry. The horses, red-nostriled, staring-eyed, lathered and dust-caked, looked like chariot racers in full career—two men were on the seat, one driving, the other plying the whip, and both constantly gazing backward. They wore visored caps and belted blouses and knee trousers—revolvers, knives, field-glasses; up and down in the wagon jolted a mass of camp stuff, and guns, and provisions. This much Terry saw during the last minute in which the equipage arrived, dashed half-way past, and there was pulled short with a suddenness which set the two horses on their haunches.

"Injuns!" cried the two men, over their shoulders. "Cut loose for your lives!"

One was a blond, pinky-skinned man, the other was

not so fair; but the faces of both were faded to a dead, dusty white by fear. Their eyes were curiously poppy.

"Where? How many?" demanded Harry and Terry, in the same breath.

"Chasing us! Five hundred of 'em! Raiding the stage line! Plundering the stations! Killing the emigrants! Burning the settlements! Cut loose! Ride for your lives!" answered the two men, in a sort of duet.

"Five hundred are quite a parcel to be chasing two men," drawled Harry. "Where'll we ride to, and how?" Mighty cool Harry was, in the midst of alarm, thought Terry. "All right," continued Harry, briskly. "One of us'll get on this mule and you can take the other in your wagon and——"

"No, no! No room!" they protested. "We've a load. We can't wait. Cut loose. You'll catch us. Ride for your lives. How far to the next station?"

"'Bout ten miles," drawled Harry.

"Gid-dap!" Down swished the lash, forward sprang the horses. "There they come!" yelled both men. "We're all dead——" and away they tore again, leaning forward on the seat, shaking the lines and plying the whip, and constantly looking back up the trail.

"Jiminy!" gasped Terry. "They said five hundred. What are we to do? We can't fight off as many as that. You—you can have Jenny," and he choked. "I'll ride Duke. Hurry!"

But Harry appeared to be in no especial hurry. He scratched his long nose reflectively, and surveyed the trail behind.

"Don't see 'em, do you?" he invited. " 'Five hundred of them'—'raiding the stage line'—'plundering the stations'—'killing the emigrants'—'burning the settlements'!" He was mimicking the two fugitives. "Five hundred fiddlesticks! That's too many Indians at one time. Besides, there aren't any settlements 'round here to burn, except at the mountains, and those two lunatics haven't been to the mountains yet. And if we 'cut loose' and 'rode for our lives,' where'd we ride to? Might better save our strength and dig a hole."

"Don't you believe them, then?"

"No. You can't believe cowards. I don't blame them any for running away from five hundred Indians, but it was right mean to run away from *us*. So I sized up that a husky outfit who'd leave a lame man and a boy to escape on a mule and a buffalo while they went ahead with a good team and wagon couldn't be depended on in talk or action either. Why, they had guns enough there to fight a week! Guess they were on a hunting trip across, and are nervous. G'lang, Duke! Jenny! Let's keep going."

"There are Indians coming, just the same," presently informed Terry, who could not help but peep behind.

"Two—three—five," pronounced Harry. "They're the five hundred whittled down to fact. We needn't pay any attention to the four hundred and ninety-five others yet. You watch Jenny, and Shep and I'll watch these fellows."

The Indians, five of them, were rapidly approaching

at a lope, down the stage trail. When they were within two hundred yards Harry, uttering a sudden "Whoa!" fell back to the rear of the wagon and, grabbing the shot-gun, faced about, and raised his hand as sign for them to stay their distance. They slackened in a jiffy, but one rode ahead, to talk.

They were armed with bows and lances; half clothed in blankets and moccasins; appeared very dirty but seemed good-natured. The old fellow who rode ahead was a stout, grinning Indian—chief, evidently, by the feather in his greasy hair.

"How?" he grunted, from his ambling spotted pony. "No shoot. 'Rapaho. No hurt um white man. Chase um. Heap fun. See wagon men? Heap fun."

"Keep back," warned Harry, over the barrel of the shot-gun. "No fun here. We don't run."

"There's Thunder Horse, Harry!" hissed Terry, who, guarding the team, had an eye also upon the Indians.

The stout spokesman on the spotted pony was really quite good-looking; three of the others were not much worse; but the fifth in the squad was entirely different—his hair was cut short on the one side and left long on the other, instead of being in two braids, and his naturally ugly face was pitted with small-pox scars. His blanket was the dirtiest of all the blankets, his features the greasiest, his mouth the coarsest; and now as he also tried to smile, his blood-shot eyes glared fiercely.

Thunder Horse, the Kiowa, he was, again: the outlaw Indian whom Terry had first encountered among

the Delawares on the emigrant trail into Kansas, a year ago, and who had been an enemy ever since. He was a drunken rascal, was Thunder Horse; nothing seemed too mean for him to try. He even had stolen George and Virgie Stanton; but Terry had helped them to get away.

Terry recognized Thunder Horse—and Thunder Horse evidently had recognized Terry, and Shep, too. Terry had pelted him with eggs, and Shep had nipped him in the calf. So Thunder Horse smiled at Harry and scowled at Terry and Shep.

"Which one?" asked Harry, aside. "The ugly one?"

"Yes. Look out for *him*. You'd better."

"All good. Like um white boy. White boy give 'Rapaho shoog, coff," wheedled the chief, advancing; and now another of the Arapahoes rode forward.

"Him Little Raven; big chief," he said, speaking English very clearly. "Me Left Hand. Little Raven talk not much English. I talk for him. Where you going?"

"To the mines, of course."

"You see two men in wagon?"

"Yes."

"We no harm them. They run, then we yell and they run faster. Little Raven want to ask if you give him a little sugar and coffee."

"Haven't any to spare."

"Give him a little sugar, little coffee, little bread, and mebbe he show you where heap gold in the mountains."

"No, no," refused Harry. "Stand back, all of you,"

for the other Indians were edging toward the wagon, from either side. Jenny smelled them, and had grown restive—trembled, snorted, and Shep maintained a constant growling from underneath the wagon.

"All right." And Left Hand spoke gutturally for the information of Little Raven, who nodded. "Brave boys. Not foolish and run. Good-bye."

Little Raven insisted on shaking hands with Harry and with Terry. "G'bye," he grunted. "Heap boy. No run," when suddenly Terry cried, past him, to a figure on horseback:

"Get out o' there!"

During the leave-taking Thunder Horse had sidled in with the others, and pressing along the wagon, behind Harry (who had considerable to watch with one pair of eyes and one gun), was stealthily thrusting his arm in under the edge of the canvas hood.

"Get out o' there!" yelped Terry.

Harry turned hastily—but there was a snarl, a whoop, and back careened Thunder Horse, on his pony, with Shep hanging to his moccasin. The moccasin and the foot within it, extending below the cart, and so convenient, had been too much for Shep. Besides, their owner was up to mischief! Shep knew him of old.

Thunder Horse kicked vigorously—and while the other Indians laughed and shouted, and Shep held hard, shaking and worrying, he jerked his knife from somewhere—flung himself low and stabbed at his black shaggy tormentor.

"Shep!" called Terry, alarmed. "Quit it! Here!"

With a final dodge, Shep tore the moccasin loose and carried it under the cart. Glaring a moment at the cart, at Terry, at Harry, Thunder Horse, scowling blackly, rode on. The four Arapahoes, laughing among themselves, followed. The way with which Shep had astonished Thunder Horse amused them greatly.

The next noon, when the Pike's Peak Limited passed the stage station, the agent hailed with the question:

"Say! Was it your dog that bit that Kiowa in the foot?"

"Yes. He'd tried to steal from the cart."

"Well, served him right. 'Twasn't much of a bite, but he had a powerful sore foot when he and those 'Rapahoes went out this mornin'. They camped here all night."

"Teeth scurcely broke the skin; but he's been so pizened with whiskey that any least scratch on him's liable to make a bad sore," added the agent's helper.

"Did two men with a team and a wagon get here in a hurry, yesterday evening?" asked Harry. "Ahead of the Indians?"

"Yes, sir!" laughed the agent. "Those hunter greenhorns, you mean, flying from a massacre? We calmed 'em down, let 'em hide in the tent, and told 'em if they'd stay behind the massacre it wouldn't catch 'em. So they waited until the massacre left, then they left."

For the next week and more the Pike's Peak Limited kept hearing, from station to station, of Thunder Horse and his sore foot. His foot had swollen, his

leg had swollen to the knee, it had swollen above the knee, it was still swelling—and he was very surly, and evidently in much pain, and drunk whenever he could obtain any liquor.

The hunters' wagon disappeared, between stations, as if on a short-cut to the Republican; and soon thereafter the Chief Little Raven squad, including the then much distressed Thunder Horse (whose leg, said the last agent, ought to be cut off), disappeared also.

The Pike's Peak Limited plodded along. At some time every day a stage or two stages from Leavenworth on the Missouri River passed, usually full, but occasionally half empty. The Valley of the Republican was close before, and behind was pressing nearer the van of that great procession.

"They're beginning to raise a dust," remarked Harry, gazing back.

"Yes; but you can see a dust ahead, too," said Terry. "Hope we get there first."

That night the camp-fires of the leading outfits on the trail behind were plainly visible, winking through the darkness; and down in the broad Republican Valley scattered other camp-fires were winking.

"An early start for us in the morning, remember," enjoined Harry.

It was almost noon when, just beating a faster-stepping team trying to overtake, the Pike's Peak Limited, first pilgrim outfit through by the new stage route, filed into the well-trodden, dusty trail made now by stage and gold-seekers combined up the wide valley of the Republican.

"Hee-haw!" exulted Jenny; but Duke the half-buffalo only flirted his little tail at sight of the new company.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRAIL GROWS LIVELY

YES, plenty of company now. The procession had penetrated a short distance before, but stretched a farther distance behind or eastward: white-topped wagons of all descriptions, their canvases torn by hail, stained by rain and dingy with dust, drawn by ox-teams, mule-teams and even cow-teams, and accompanied by men, women and children afoot, a few ahorse, every individual and every animal striving to reach the Pike's Peak country and the Cherry Creek diggin's there.

The pilgrimage was about to "noon"; and with Duke and Jenny pulling bravely, making their best showing, the Limited skirted the line, while good-naturedly replying to the various welcomes.

Pretty soon the road ahead was blocked, as the overlanders spread right and left to cook and eat dinner.

"Let's drive off to the side, yonder, Terry," bade Harry. "That looks like a good spot near to that 'Root Hog or Die' outfit."

"How are you, boys?" greeted the proprietor of the "Root Hog or Die" wagon. "We're most of us from Ohio. Where are you from?"

"From the Big Blue Valley, Kansas Territory, farther east," answered Harry.

"We came by the stage trail," added Terry.

"I see. Well, we took a vote and decided on the Republican Valley, and a hard time we've had, but here we are. What do you say to cooking our dinner on the one fire, and we'll swap notes?"

He seemed to be an extraordinarily well-spoken man, notwithstanding his untrimmed beard and rough garb. Was a college professor, as happened, in Ohio; and was going to the mountains for his health as well as to make a fortune. So here he was, with his wife and little girl, accompanying a lot of other Ohio people.

Leaving Duke and Jenny to graze a little while longer, after dinner the "boys from the Big Blue" strolled about, to inspect other outfits and exchange information. The noon camp was rather quiet, with the men and women and children resting or finishing their dishes; but back down the trail there appeared to be a commotion—as of people gathering around a wagon from which a man was making a speech.

"Come on. We might as well see all the sights on the way," bade Harry.

The speech-maker's back was toward them. Terry figured that if he talked as rapidly as he flourished his arms, his speech would soon be ended for lack of words. However, the words were still flowing strong. Something in the loud tone, and the gestures, and the long unkempt black hair, and the high thick shoulders in the ragged shirt, and the greasy slouch hat, struck Terry as familiar.

"Pine Knot Ike!" he exclaimed.

"The very man—our valued acquaintance and fellow citizen, Ike Chubbers, 'half wild hoss and half grizzly b'ar,' " chuckled Harry. "We'll stand off and listen to his discourse."

They halted on the edge of the little throng, from where they could view Ike's hairy profile as, beating the air with his fists, above the upturned gaping faces, he delivered his harangue.

"I air the only man who ever roped an' rid an alligator in its native swamps," he was proclaiming, and already he was quite hoarse. "I air the only man who fit off five hunderd of the wust savage Injuns that roam these hyar plains, an' killed nigh every one of 'em. Gentlemen an' feller citizens: Look at this hyar bar'l. Count the bullet-holes." And by main force Ike held aloft his whiskey barrel. It certainly was well peppered with holes. "When the savage Injuns come down on me I war alone, travelin' my peaceful way to help civilize the diggin's, but I war too tough to kill. Injuns make a mistake when they attack a man o' my nater, gentlemen, for I air slow to wrath, but I air a powerful fighter when anybody, red or white, goes to twist my tail. I air a ring-tail twister myself, gentlemen. So I tells my bulls to charge them Injuns, an' I forts myself behind this bar'l an' opens up with my pill-slingers. We fit for a runnin' mile, until this bar'l war as you see it now, gents, an' what Injuns warn't dead had fired all their shots an' skeedaddled. Then I gets out an' cuts off the head of the chief of 'em all, an' puts it in the bar'l, an' hyar it is on exhi-

bition. The head complete of a real, native wild Injun, ladies an' gents—the actual head of old Roarin' Buffler, big chief o' the combined Sioux, Kiowa, Cheyenne an' 'Rapaho nations, most o' who air still layin' out thar on the desolate plains, sculped by my own hands. Old Roarin' Buffler hisself put seven holes in this bar'l 'fore his head went in. The head air nicely pickled an' perfectly natteral, ladies an' gents; an' for the privilege o' seein' it I ax only a small collection. Will you kindly cirkilate my hat, an' be keerful not to take out more'n you drop in."

Whereupon, having handed down his battered slouch hat, Ike paused, wiped his face with a dirty bandanna, and seated himself upon his scarred barrel.

"He put every hole in that with his own revolver, I bet you!" whispered Terry. "The old fraud!"

"A convenient way of drinking the whiskey," murmured Harry. "If the barrel wasn't his, he can claim the Indians did it, you know."

"Well, we can tell him about the first hole, all right," scolded the indignant Terry. "And so can other people."

"Now for the head," invited Harry.

The hat had been returned to Ike, who eyed the contents doubtfully, shook them over, and stowed them in his pocket with a scowl.

"Six bits air a mighty measley sum to pay for the privilege an' eddication o' seein' the actual head o' the biggest, fiercest Injun who ever terrerized the West till he tuk arter the wrong pusson, but I'll show him to you, jest the same."

So saying, Ike reached into the barrel, and extracting his prize, held it up. Harry nudged Terry; staring, Terry saw, recognized, gasped.

"Thunder Horse! Aw——"

"Do you know, I kind of expected that," alleged Harry. "I kind of felt it was coming."

The face of the severed head was assuredly the hideous face of Thunder Horse, the drunken Kiowa; and the hair was the Kiowa's hair.

"Thunder Horse died because of his leg, and Ike found him and cut off his head!" scoffed Terry. "I'm going straight to the wagon and show the whole thing up. We'll make Ike look sick—that old blow and his barrel and his 'big-chief' head!"

"No," opposed Harry. "Wait. There's no use in showing Ike up now. We'll save our ammunition."

"Well, I'm mighty glad old Thunder Horse is gone, anyhow," observed Terry, as they went back to the cart. "He was bad medicine."

The Ohio party were starting on. So the boys from the Big Blue put Duke and Jenny to work again and fell in with the procession wending broad way up the shallow valley of the Republican.

Once every day the procession opened to give passage to the stages westward bound on the trail; and at last stages eastward bound, returning to Leavenworth, were met. They were assailed with all kinds of questions, but they brought little news of importance, and apparently little gold.

Many people eastward bound, ahorse or afoot, also were met.

"Turn back, every one of you," they advised. "Folks are going out faster'n they're coming in. Some of 'em don't even stop to unhitch their teams. Picks and spades are offered at fifteen cents apiece, and no takers, and the man who makes fifty cents a day is lucky."

"Auraria's burned and we've hanged the boomers," proclaimed another squad.

And another squad, trudging along, warned earnestly:

"Look out for the man with buckskin patches on his breeches. He's the leader of the gang who's robbing the pilgrims. Remember the buckskin patches. There's no elephant—only jackasses."

Not few in the procession did turn back, especially when the water and fuel began to fail, as wider and more bare and sandy the valley became. Soon there were several marches without water at all, for the river had sunk into the sand. The choking dust floated high, the sun was burning hot. The majority of the animals were sore-footed, from the gravel and cactus and brush. Duke, who had been behaving nobly, seemed to have strained his shoulder and was limping. Jenny was gaunter than ever.

The trail had veered to the southwest—to strike, it was reported, some creeks, and Cherry Creek itself.

"That's another trail yonder to the south, isn't it?" spoke Harry, one morning.

"Yes; and wagons on it!" exclaimed Terry. "Maybe it's the Smoky Hill trail, or the people from the Santa Fe trail."

The "Root Hog or Die" professor, who tramped with them while his oxen followed of their own accord, consulted a map that he carried.

"I think they must be from the Smoky Hill route," he said.

The two lines of travel approached each other, and at evening were about to join. Terry uttered a cheer.

"I see the wheel-barrow man!" he cried. "They're the Smoky Hill crowd, all right."

"They look pretty well used up," remarked Harry. "Must have had had a hard trip."

The wheel-barrow man, pushing bravely, was in the van. His barrow wobbled, and the wheel was reinforced with rawhide, but he himself was as cheery as ever when the Big Blue outfit welcomed him.

"Yes, terrible hard trip," he acknowledged. "Some of us near died with thirst, and I hear tell that several wagons were burnt for fuel, so's to cook food and keep the folks from starving. But those of us who are left are still going."

"Same here," asserted Harry. "How far to the mountains, do you reckon?"

"Better than a hundred miles, but we'll get there."

The next day the pilgrims from the Smoky Hill trail and the pilgrims from the Republican trail traveled on together, with every eye eagerly set ahead, for the first sight of the mountains.

"I see 'em! Hooray!

"There's the land o' gold, boys!"

"Those are the Rocky Mountains! We're almost through."

"They're awful small for their size, aren't they?" quavered a woman.

They did appear so. They were like a band of low hummocky clouds in the western horizon. But the next morning, when the outfits climbed over a gravelly ridge that grew a few pines, one after another they cheered joyfully again. Hats were waved, sunbonnets were flourished. The mountains seemed much closer—they loomed grandly in a semi-circle from south to north; their crests were white, their slopes were green and gray.

"Where's Pike's Peak?"

Everybody wanted to know that. The "Root Hog or Die" professor consulted his map, for information.

"I rather think Pike's Peak is the last peak we see, to the south," he mused. "That to the far north is called Long's Peak."

"Where are the diggin's, then?"

"Well, they're somewhere in between."

From the piny ridge the route descended along the side of a brushy valley pleasantly dotted with cottonwoods and other leafy trees, and struck the head of a creek course—and presently another trail on which, from the south, still other pilgrim outfits were hastening northward at best speed.

Where the trail from the east joined with this second trail from the south a signboard faced, pointing north, with the words: "Santa Fe-Salt Lake Trail. Cherry Creek Diggin's, 70 m."

"Cherry Creek at last!" affirmed Harry, that evening. "Whew, but that mountain air tastes good!"

Now this combined trail on northwest to the diggin's was a well-traveled trail indeed, deep with sand and dust. Occasionally it dipped into the creek bed, which in places was wide enough and dry enough for the teams. The mountains were on the left—distant thirty miles, declared the professor, although the greenhorns declared they were within a short walk. High rolling plains were on the right.

A few prospectors were encountered, already digging and washing in the creek, or scouting about. From the last night's camp a little bevy of lights could be seen, ahead—the diggin's at the mouth of the creek! During the next morning——

"There's the river! There's the Platte!" announced voices, indicating a line of cottonwoods before.

Wagons coming down from the north, by the Platte trail, also could be seen, making for a collection of tents and huts gathered near where the Cherry Creek apparently emptied into the Platte.

Much excitement reigned throughout the procession. The wheel-barrow man already had trundled ahead. Duke limped gamely, and Jenny kept her long ears pricked forward. Now it was every outfit for itself, in order to secure the best location and get to work.

In mid-afternoon the trail forked, and signs directed: "To the left for Auraria, the coming metropolis," and "Straight ahead for Denver City." Men were stationed here, beseeching the pilgrims to settle in Auraria, or in Denver, and make their fortunes. The men were red-faced and perspiring and earnest.

Auraria was the older, and on the mountain side of

the creek—had the newspaper! Denver was the better built, and the more enterprising, was on the trail side of the creek and had the stage office.

"What'll we do, Harry?" panted Terry, as momentarily the Limited halted, held by the confused press in front, bombarded and undecided.

"Keep agoing straight ahead," said Harry. "That's been our program. If we don't like Denver we can cross to Auraria, but blamed if I can see much difference between 'em."

And that was true. On the flat ground along the shallow Cherry Creek lay sprawled an ugly collection of log huts and dingy tents and Indian tepees of buffalo hides, with people moving busily among them, and a host of emigrant wagons and animals and camps on the outskirts. All the flat on both sides of the creek was dingy and dusty, with the brush crushed down or gleaned clean for forage and fuel.

East stretched the wide plains; west was the cottonwood timber marking the Platte River, and beyond the river, some distance, were bare hills, grayish and reddish, and behind them the real mountains, rising rocky and high until their snow crests gleamed against the sky.

Distant, a line of gold-seekers with wagons and with packs seemed to be traveling into the mountains; and down along the Platte were entering Denver, from the north, other gold-seekers, to take their places.

A hum of voices welled, filling the air with excitement.

"Shucks! Is this all there is?" complained Terry.

"I don't see any city. The whole thing isn't as big as Manhattan, even."

"And not half as good-looking," added Harry.

But there was not much space for halting to criticize. The procession was pressing on, jostling, crowding—spreading out, some of it to find camping spots at once, some to drive farther on. With the cart creaking, and Duke limping badly, Jenny stumbling and grunting, and Shep, dusty and burry, pacing soberly at the rear, the Pike's Peak Limited entered Denver City.

"Hope we see Sol," ventured Harry, as they threaded their way among the first tents, and several roofless cabins, located out where signs stuck in the bare ground proclaimed: "Denver City Town Co. Fine building lots for sale."

In front of the tent flaps, and in the cabin doorways, men in boots, with trousers tucked in, and in flannel shirts, red or blue, were sitting, gazing abroad, but none of these was Sol.

Further along, the road took on the semblance of a street—thronged with emigrants; booted, whiskered men in their flannel shirts, and wearing revolvers; Indians, Mexicans, oxen, and dogs.

"I don't see Sol, though," commented Terry, searching about among those faces, every one of which was strange to him.

"No, but I see plenty of men with buckskin patches on their breeches," answered Harry. "They're the old-timers, I reckon. Wonder if the name of any of 'em is Russell."

The passage of the half-buffalo and the yellow mule hitched tandem attracted considerable attention, and a volley of bantering remarks. But a chorus of whoops and a general rush made Harry and Terry glance behind.

"A stage is coming. We'd better get out of the way, hadn't we?" suggested Terry.

"Right-o!" And Harry, driving, drew aside to a clear place opposite a long one-story canvas-roofed log building which announced: "Denver House." This was the hotel.

The stage jingled up; and while the passengers piled out was surrounded by a jostling crowd of whiskered, red-shirted and blue-shirted and buckskin-shirted (as well as buckskin-patched) residents.

As it rolled away again, to put up for the night, Terry heard himself and Harry hailed by a familiar voice, at last.

"Well, I declare! Got through, did you—buffalo and mule and dog and all! What kind of a trip did you have?"

CHAPTER IX

NOW WHERE IS THE "ELEPHANT"?

It was Journalist Villard, tanned and whiskered, and already booted and shirted and armed like the rest of the inhabitants. He shook hands vigorously with them.

"Pretty fair," replied Harry. "We've just got in. You seem to be the only person we know here."

"I won't be that only person long," laughed Mr. Villard. "The ends of the world are gathering here at the rate of a thousand a day. Why, by that very stage arrived a banker I used to know well in Cincinnati, and another friend at whose house in New York I've often eaten dinner. But the reason I met the stage was that I rather expected to find in it Horace Greeley and A. D. Richardson. They're on the way."

"Not Horace Greeley of the New York *Tribune?*" queried Harry, as if astonished.

"Yes; that's the Greeley. Mr. Richardson represents the Boston *Journal* and some other Eastern papers. All we newspaper fellows will write the truth about the gold fields."

"How near is the gold?" eagerly asked Terry.

"Can you show us where to dig? Have you dug?"

"Not very much. Not for a dollar and a half a day —and that's the most anybody is getting hereabouts. The whole creek bed is being turned upside down. But you see that line of pilgrims trailing out into the mountains, west across the Platte?"

"Yes."

"That's a rush to some new diggin's. They're following a new strike. It's reported on good authority that a Georgian named John Gregory has found the mother vein, as they call it, about forty miles out. It's a pound-a-day strike, according to the say, and the gold down below has been washed from that vein. The people are flocking in by the five hundred at a time. I haven't been up there myself yet, but I hope the news is true. Another month and we'd have had a riot in these Cherry Creek diggin's. As it is, about half the in-comers have pulled out for California, or home—and there's been talk of hanging D. C. Oakes, who issued a 'Pike's Peak Guide' last winter, and Editor Byers, of the *News*."

"Are those new diggin's on the Platte?" asked Harry, keenly.

"No. There're up Clear Creek, and nowhere near the Platte."

"Oh, jiminy!" sighed Terry. "Aren't there mines closer than that? My father was out here last summer and found one just a few miles away, up the Platte River."

"A Fifty-eighter, is he? Is he here now, and where's his mine?"

"No, sir; he came home sick, at Christmas; and he doesn't remember. But he had some dust."

"Those early claims didn't amount to much, as I understand," stated Mr. Villard. "That's what has fooled the people."

"Are any of the Russell brothers hereabouts?" asked Harry.

"The original boomers? Yes, they're all here now. Dr. Levi Russell has spent the winter here; but Green Russell and J. Oliver have just got in from Georgia with another party of some one hundred and fifty. You'll find them over at Auraria, though. You know, Green Russell located Auraria and named it for his home town in Georgia. The Aurarians and Denverites don't mix much, except when the stage comes. The Russells will likely be at the Eldorado Hotel this evening."

"And where's Archie Smith? Did you bring him through all right?"

"Yes. We landed him here. But I think he's joined the rush into the mountains. What are you boys intending to do now? Camp and refit, I suppose, before you look for your mine. Which are you going to be—Denverites or Aurarians?"

"Both," laughed Harry. "But Auraria's flying the United States flag, I see."

"That's over their hotel, the Eldorado. Mrs. Murat made it. Her husband claims to be an Italian count. He does barbering, and she takes in washing—and together, at the prices they charge, they're getting rich a great deal faster than most of these gold-seekers.

Auraria's proud of that flag, because it's the only one in the state. Denver pretends to poke fun at it, and says it's a laundry sign, manufactured from old red and blue shirts and Mrs. Murat's white petticoat."

"What state?" demanded Harry.

"The new State of Jefferson—the future new state. Things move fast out here. A convention was held last month by the miners, to organize for another convention on June 8 when a state constitution will be adopted and sent to Congress. Some people wanted the state named Pike's Peak. You'll see the convention call in the *Rocky Mountain News.* Ah——!" and Mr. Villard gazed aside. "There's a man I ought to talk with. Good-bye; meet you later, I hope."

"I don't believe we'll wait for that convention," proposed Harry. "And I don't believe we ought to put in much time hunting for your father's mine. We'll get right into the new diggin's before every spot's taken." Harry evidently was catching the fever. "First, though——"

"Paper? *Rocky Mountain News!* Fresh off the press! Buy a paper, Mister? Tell you all about the latest strikes, and where to go."

He was very slim, tall young man whose trousers were finished off below the knees with gunny sacking, in order to cover his long legs.

"Yes. Let me have one," responded Harry. And added, to Terry, while handing out a dime: "That'll give us the quickest information."

The tall slim young man was turning the dime over and over in his palm.

"No good," he said. "Nothing less than a quarter goes, out here."

"But they told us picks and spades are fifteen cents."

"In trade, maybe. But these papers are a quarter, Mister. Two bits. That's the smallest change in camp. Dust or coin."

"Hum!" grunted Harry, producing a quarter. He scratched his nose as he glanced at the paper. "At this rate we'll soon be busted."

The paper was entitled *"Rocky Mountain News,* Cherry Creek, K. T."—the initials standing, of course, for Kansas Territory. W. N. Byers was proprietor. It was printed on a coarse brownish paper—seemed to be full of items about gold being brought in from "gulches"—a number of advertisements and announcements—had the convention call——

"We'll read it in camp," quoth Harry. "Gwan, Duke! Jenny! Haw!"

"Want to sell that buffalo, stranger?" interrupted another voice.

This man was a square, stubbly faced, red-faced and red-haired individual, in a faded cotton shirt and old army trousers belted at the waist with a rope.

"Why—I don't know," replied Harry, reflectively, scratching his nose.

The man walked around Duke, scrutinizing him.

"He's got a buckskin patch on. We'd better watch out," whispered Terry, to his partner. So he had: the whole seat of his trousers was buckskin coarsely stitched in place.

"Half the men in camp have buckskin or other

patches," chuckled Harry. "That gives me an idea."

"Offer you $25, dust, stranger," abruptly spoke the man. "He's lame. You can't use him. He'll be no good in the diggin's."

"What'll you do with him, then?" questioned Harry.

"Put him in my show. He won't have to work. And he's too tough for butchering. But he'll be all right on exhibition."

"Hum!" mused Harry. "My partner and I'll talk it over. We're going to camp over night before going on."

"If you're aiming for the mountains, you'll have to leave him, anyway. The trail is straight up—takes twenty oxen to haul half a ton. I'll give you $35, dust, for buffalo and cart. I'll exhibit 'em both."

"We'll talk it over," repeated Harry.

"So long, then. You can find me. Name of Reilly."

"What do you say, Terry?" queried Harry, as they continued on to a camping spot. "Duke's yours."

"No, he's part of the outfit. We're in together, aren't we? But I'd hate to sell him unless he'll be treated well. Maybe we ought to sell him; he's lame. Haven't we any money left?"

"Mighty little. And we're nearly out of grub, too. If newspapers are twenty-five cents each, what'll a sack of flour cost? I was thinking of a shave and a hair-cut, but——! I'll shave myself and we'll cut each other's hair."

"If that mine is somewhere around yet, we may not have to sell him."

"And we'll need the cart to pack our gold in," added Harry. "But Duke and the cart wouldn't be much good up in the mountains, I should think."

They were fortunate in finding a camping place, with wood and water, near the mouth of Cherry Creek, at the Platte, and there tied Duke and Jenny out. The first thing to do was to wash—the next thing to write home—and the next, to have an early supper.

"We'll go back in before the post-office closes, look for some of the Russells, and do all that we can; and be ready to start right along somewhere or other in the morning."

"That's it," agreed Terry. "Whew, but there must be a lot of people hunting gold. Wonder if all of those on that trail are bound for the Gregory diggin's! We'll have to hurry." For he was getting the fever, too.

"We will," promised Harry.

When they had left Shep on guard and had hastened back into Denver, a line of men extended for one hundred yards from the window in the stage office labeled "Letter Express." Harry stood in the line until almost sunset. He returned to Terry with puzzled face.

"We got a letter, all right, but it cost twenty-five cents extra, and the one I mailed cost another twenty-five cents, just up to Fort Laramie on the North Platte. Then the government takes it on. There's only a private express out of here, for mail, and it's doing a great business."

However, that letter from the Big Blue was worth the twenty-five cents.

Now, with the approach of night, Denver and Auraria, its neighbor, were lively. The Denver House hotel seemed to be devoted mainly to drinking and gambling. The long bar was crowded with all sorts of people; and behind the card tables sat men, some of them in white silk shirts and black broadcloth suits, urging bets.

Across the street was a collection of Indian tepees—an Arapahoe village, according to report. The women and children stayed among the lodges, but their husbands and fathers strolled everywhere, in blankets and buffalo robes, saying little and seeing much.

"There's Chief Little Raven—and Left Hand, too!" exclaimed Terry. "Wait a second. I'm going to ask them about Thunder Horse."

Little Raven and Left Hand soberly shook hands with their former acquaintances.

"Thunder Horse he dead from his leg," explained Left Hand. "Dog bite poison him—mebbe he poison dog. Whiskey bad, make him fool. One day he die; the two foolish men who run away in that wagon take him on in wagon and sell him same day to one big-mouth man near the Republican trail. Now his head is in Aurary. You want to see?"

"Pine Knot Ike's come!" asserted Terry, as he and Harry proceeded to Auraria, whither they were bound anyway. "I don't want to see him."

"I'd a heap rather see Sol," answered Harry. "But we'll try to see the Russells. That's important."

The creek was so nearly dry that several tents and log shacks had been placed in its sandy bed. The

banks were about four feet high here, and a shaky log foot-bridge crossed from town to town.

Auraria was larger than Denver City, but the buildings were rougher, whereas the Denver City logs had been surfaced and trimmed. Still, Auraria seemed to have the principal store building, as yet—a story and a half high, with a lumber roof. The upper floor was occupied by the *Rocky Mountain News*. Through the glass window the printers might be seen setting type. Under them was a noisy saloon.

Miners, emigrants, Mexicans, Indians—flannel shirts, heavy boots, moccasins, much whiskers and long hair: in this respect the Auraria out of doors was like the Denver out of doors.

"I hear Ike," said Terry.

At the corner just beyond the Eldorado Hotel somebody stationed beside a flaring pitchy torch was declaiming in a loud voice, before a large tent. But it wasn't Pine Knot Ike. It was the red-headed Mr. Reilly. On a placard across the tent front was the announcement, rudely charcoaled:

"SEE IT! SEE IT! SEE IT!
The Ferocious Head of Chief Bloody Knife!
Cannibal of the Plains!
Slain in Hand-to-Hand Conflict by the Noted
Frontiersman Black Panther!
"Admission 50c gold."

Evidently this was the show to which Mr. Reilly had referred. Standing on a barrel, and occasionally

coughing from the smoke of the torch fastened to an upright against the barrel, he strenuously invited the public inside. He accepted the price, and waved each patron to pass within. However, business was not at all brisk; and suddenly catching the eye of Harry, he beckoned.

"Go inside, gentlemen," he bade. "It's my treat. Walk in; view the ferocious cannibal head and the equally ferocious scout who cut it off after killing the wearer of it."

"Aw——!" attempted Terry; but Harry, with a nudge, interrupted him.

"Go on in, Terry. I'll talk with Mr. Reilly a minute."

The tent contained several whiskered, booted miners and emigrants, gazing at the hideous head of Thunder Horse, also on a barrel—Ike's barrel—and on a stool beside the barrel was seated Ike himself, alias the "noted frontiersman, Black Panther." Ike's thick black hair and whiskers were shaggier than ever. He was attired in the same greasy slouch hat, but furthermore in a shabby, red-flannel-trimmed buckskin shirt whose gaudy fringes fell to his boot-tops. Around his waist were belted two revolvers and a butcher-knife, and against his knees rested a battered, large-muzzled yager or smooth-bore musket—fortunately harmless by reason of lacking a trigger.

From amidst his hair and whiskers Ike stared before him fiercely and fixedly, occasionally slowly blinking in the light of a tallow candle lantern.

It all was so perfectly absurd that—but hold on!

Look out! Bang! Bang! Without a word a red-shirted miner who had been intently gazing and swaying as if drunk had whipped out his revolver and fired. At the first shot, away spun the head, and simultaneously with the second shot away, uttering a loud shout, had dived Black Panther the noted frontiersman—half through the tent and half under the tent, disappearing while almost tumbling the canvas on top of the company. He was gone before his stool had ceased rolling.

"Set 'em up ag'in!" roared the red-shirted miner. "Fetch on the rest o' that Injun! Whoop-ee! Whar's that air Panther man? I want to show him some shootin'! I'm an Injun killer myself from Pike County, Missoury!"

Into the tent, now filled with shouts and laughter and powder smoke, rushed Mr. Reilly, close followed by the alarmed Harry. The miner's friends led him out. Mr. Reilly picked up the head, which, weathered as hard and as dry as a mummy's head, now was drilled right through from nose to back of skull—which did not improve its face any. But Mr. Reilly seemed delighted.

"That bullet hole's the best thing yet," he declared. "I'll have to change the name of the scout to Dead-Shot Bill. But wait till I ketch that other man—the measley rabbit, ripping my tent to pieces and disgracing the clothes I lent him. How'd one of you boys like to be Dead-Shot Bill, for a spell?"

"Nope, thank you," laughed Harry. "Come on, Terry. We've got more business to 'tend to."

"Well, we can sell him the cart and Duke for $50," informed Harry, outside. "He's getting together a show. It will be a soft job for Duke; no heavy hauling, just standing 'round and eating and looking wild."

"I wouldn't sell him Duke if Ike's to be in the show, too," declared Terry.

"Ike," assured Harry, "will never be back. He's probably running yet. And maybe we won't have to sell Duke. Now for the Russells, anyway. We'll try the Eldorado."

But they were relieved from entering the crowded Eldorado by encountering Journalist Villard and another man just stepping out.

"Ah!" spoke Mr. Villard, recognizing them, in the dusk. "If you wish to ask Mr. Green Russell anything, here he is."

"Yes; we want to ask him if he remembers a man in his party of last summer by the name of Jones," said Harry, quickly, for it was apparent that Messrs. Villard and Russell were in a hurry.

"I shorely do," responded Mr. Russell. He was a broad-shouldered man, with sparse beard and long-pointed moustache—had a cool eye and a deliberate speech.

"He is this boy's father," continued Harry. "He came home with some dust and claimed to have located a mine about a day's travel from here, on the Platte."

"If that was Fifty-eight, 'tain't wuth looking after now," decided Mr. Russell. "Too close in. I reckon it was yonder whar we had some dry diggin's that we-all worked out, 'round Placer Camp."

"Captain Russell's an old miner, you know," put in Mr. Villard. "He's prospected through here pretty closely, since he came out first, and so have his brothers; and they're convinced that the only paying mines will be found in the mountains."

"Yes," drawled Mr. Russell. "These hyar sandy creeks peter out. You have to get up higher, into the gravel and rock."

He and Mr. Villard passed on, only to be repeatedly stopped and questioned in their progress.

"That settles us, I think," said Harry, as he and Terry turned for their camp. "We'll pack Jenny and light out for the Gregory Gulch region. We've got to have a mine ready for your father when he comes, so as to pay him back the 'grub-stake.'"

"And another ready for George to work," reminded Terry. "He'll expect an elephant, too."

As the two partners recrossed the foot-bridge into Denver City, night had cloaked the mountains in the west and had enfolded all the plains. Down here lights flickered in tents and through the chinking of windowless, floorless and sometimes roofless cabins, twinkled among the other gold-seekers' camps spread over the broken brush, and on the trails in north and south and yonder for Gregory Gulch.

CHAPTER X

FORWARD MARCH TO GREGORY GULCH

"WHAT'LL we do with all our gunny sacks?" queried Terry, when after an early breakfast they drove across for Auraria, to deliver Duke and the cart and make their purchases.

"They don't weigh much, but they take up a lot of room. I have a scheme, though," answered Harry.

Early as they were, the emigrant camps on the plain, and Denver City and Auraria in the midst, were astir: smoke was welling from camp-fires and chimneys, shouts and calls arose as outfits prepared to journey onward, people were moving busily, and the procession beyond the Platte was wending in a long file mountainward.

Already another announcement was displayed on Mr. Reilly's show tent. "Also (it said) the Only Genuine Wild Buffalo Now in Captivity, and the Identical Wagon That He Drew Across the Plains."

Mr. Reilly was working on the first announcement, to make it read, "The Bullet-Pierced Head of the Ferocious Chief Bloody Knife," and to change the frontiersman's name from "Black Panther" to "Dead-Shot Bill."

"It's a pity one of you fellers won't hire out to be my scout," he proffered. "'Tother one might take in the tickets at the door. I got the shirt and weepon back from that man Ike, but he won't work again. Anyhow, you can unhitch and help me get that buffalo inside this tent, out of sight. We'll tie him to a stake, and roll the wagon in afterward."

This was done, after the flaps had been thrown wide. Duke limped in rather gladly, was stationed at the far end beside the head of the late Thunder Horse, and the wagon, unloaded of its few goods, was pushed and pulled to another position.

"You might stay with Jenny and the stuff, while I do our marketing," proposed Harry to Terry, as he shouldered the big roll of gunny sacks, for some mysterious purpose, and lugged it away.

He disappeared in the doorway of the store under the *News* office. Jenny hee-hawed after him. She missed him and Duke.

Harry soon returned jubilant, without the sacks.

"All right. We're fixed," he proclaimed. "I traded them in for a sack of dried apples. The man didn't appreciate their value, at first, but I explained. Value No. 1: Most of the cabins hereabouts have only dirt floors; the sacking will be fine for carpets to keep the dust down. Value No. 2: It will be handy for covering windows, to keep out the wind. Value No. 3: It will be useful to patch pants with, instead of buckskin. Value No. 4: It will lengthen pants—in fact, the pants of that *Rocky Mountain News* peddler gave me the idea. Value No. 5: It will make good ticking

for straw mattresses. To tell the truth, it is so valuable that I wouldn't part with any of it except for dried apples. Now we can have pie!"

They bestowed on Duke and the cart a friendly good-luck slap, shook hands with Mr. Reilly, and proceeded to the store with Jenny. The purchases amounted to considerable. First, a pack-saddle, not brand new, but of ash and rawhide in excellent condition; a sack of flour, the sack of dried apples, a quarter of antelope meat—the only cheap meat, at four cents a pound; five pounds of coffee (very dear), soda, salt, sugar, soap, a square of rawhide for soling their boots, two miner's pans for washing out the gold, etc., etc.

These, with the picks and spades, and the bedding, and the cooking and eating utensils made quite a problem. No wonder that Jenny groaned when the saddle was cinched upon her.

However, with her pack bulging on either side and atop, the tools projecting and the cooking utensils jingling, she accepted her fate, and stepping in cautious, top-heavy fashion submitted to being headed out of town into the trail for the Platte River crossing.

Terry, the shot-gun upon his shoulder, and Harry, shouldering a pick and spade that had not fitted anywhere, followed close after. So did Shep, who carried nothing but his shaggy coat. On the whole, no one could deny that this was a real prospecting outfit.

"Forty miles, they say, to those Gregory diggin's," remarked Harry. "Wonder if they mean forty or four hundred? You see that flat-top mountain—the

first mountain in the northwest? How far do you think it is?"

"Five miles," asserted Terry.

"Well, it's *eighteen* miles! They call it Table Mountain. That's where we go in. So when a fellow's looking five miles, in this country, he's looking eighteen, and that makes forty miles about one hundred and fifty."

The trail was becoming crowded as other outfits converged from the right and left for the Platte crossing. It was a procession much like the procession on the Pike's Peak trails—oxen, horses, mules, cows, dogs, wagons; and men, women and children either afoot or riding. But there were more men with packs on their backs and more animals packed like Jenny.

The long-legged Jenny, her pack swaying and jingling, could be urged past the slower travelers—and well that was, for ere the Platte was reached, the wagons in the procession had stopped. They formed a waiting line several hundred yards in length. Forging to the front, Terry and Harry might see the occasion. The Platte evidently was to be crossed by means of a flat-boat ferry, running back and forth on a cable. So the wagons need must bide their turn.

Harry went forward to investigate. He came back with a rueful face.

"Two dollars and a half for a wagon outfit; a dollar and a half for our outfit," he reported. "The ferry's run by a couple of Indian traders named McGaa and Smith. Wonder if we can't ford."

"Nary ford, this time o' year, strangers," reproved

a red-shirted miner. "See those wagons; they'll be out o' sight by noon! Quicksand!"

Several wagons foolishly had tried to ford; and there they were, abandoned, some of them even only a few rods out. Already just the tops of two were visible above the surface.

"Guess we won't risk it," agreed Terry.

So they paid their fee, and squeezing in aboard the ferry, were carried across.

The trail continued, entering amidst low rolling swells of sandy gravel and sparse, tufty grass and stiff brush, between which and over and on toiled the pilgrimage for the new diggin's where one John Gregory and others were harvesting their pound of gold a day. The Gregory claim was said to be so marvelously rich and yellow that no strangers had been permitted to see it.

From the high places glimpses were given, on the right, of a creek course below, bordered by willows and cottonwoods. This was that Clear Creek on whose headwaters in the mountains the Gregory strike had been made. But the landmark of Table Mountain drew near so gradually, in spite of the haste by everybody, that not until evening did it loom close at hand, shadowed with purple and rising a wall-like six hundred feet.

Here the trail ran along Clear Creek itself, and the procession was halting for night camp, to water and graze the animals and to rest. On both sides of the creek prospectors had settled, to wash out gold; but now the most of them had quit work and in front of

their tents and bough lean-tos were preparing supper.

"Better stop off, boys," warned a hairy miner, who, squatting over a little fire, was deftly cooking flap-jacks—tossing them one by one from a fry-pan into the air and catching them other side down. "You can't go much farther till mornin'. There's a trail ahead so steep your mule'll have to turn over an' prop herself with her ears to keep from slidin' backwards."

"Sounds like good advice," accepted Harry. "You going on in, or are you making your pile here?"

"Makin' a pile o' flap-jacks, if those hungry partners don't eat 'em faster'n I can cook. Yep, we're goin' on somewhere, if this creek doesn't pan out better. We've been followin' the gold all the way from Pike's Peak an' the Boilin' Springs, an' the best diggin's alluz seem forty miles ahead."

"Where are the Boiling Springs?" asked Terry. "Do they boil?"

"Haven't you heard o' them yet? They're down at the foot o' Pike's—tremenjous good water, sody an' iron both an' a lot o' other minerals, I reckon; bubblin' an' poppin', an' liable to cure anything. Sacred to the Injun, they were, but they're powerful good for white man."

Jenny, her pack removed, took a hearty roll, and a shake, and a long cold drink, and fell to browsing. Terry built a fire and prepared camp; Harry got out their own fry-pan and the coffee pot, and while the water in the pot was coming to a boil he proceeded to mix batter.

"What'll it be?" queried Terry, hungry.

"Flap-jacks."

"I didn't know you could make them."

"I didn't, either, to date. But I can."

The first flap-jack stuck confoundingly, and would not turn at all except by pieces. So it burned, and they gave it to Shep. The next sailed free and high, and landed, dough side down, in Terry's lap. Terry started to laugh, but changed his tune and frantically tore the hot dough loose, then executed a war-dance while he sucked his fingers.

"Too much flap," commented Harry. "Once again."

This flap-jack flew straight for his face and he ducked only just in time to prevent being plastered.

"Everything goes to Shep," he complained. "I can make 'em, all right, but I haven't the knack of turning 'em."

"You can shout there's a knack, Mister," agreed the other flap-jack performer, who now had stepped over to watch. "You'll not be a true miner till you can toss a flap-jack up the cabin chimbley an' ketch it again outside, turned over. Where you boys from?"

"Blue River Valley, Kansas. We were the Pike's Peak Limited; now we're the Extra Limited," explained Harry.

"The Russell brothers are somewhar in this hyar procession, aren't they?"

"Are they? All of them?"

"So I heard tell. They left Aurary today, for the new diggin's."

"Are the Gregory diggin's full of gold?" eagerly invited Terry.

"Mebbe so, for people who know how to find it. Trouble is, this country's fuller of people who don't know how to find it."

He went back to his own fire. Harry turned the rest of the flap-jacks with a knife, and they were very good. He really had become an excellent camp cook.

"Jiminy! Wish we could see Sol Judy at the diggin's," voiced Terry. "He knows all about gold. He was in California."

"Yes, Sol knows gold, and I have an idea we don't," answered Harry, with sober reflection.

"I suppose when we see something yellow we'll save it," hazarded Terry, more hopefully.

Forward, march, with morning light, to Gregory Gulch! Clear Creek had to be forded; and while, soaked to the knees, they trudged on behind the shambling Jenny, and Terry was wondering how they were to climb Table Mountain, the trail left the creek, veered to the right, and traversed a deep narrow gulch whose rocky bottom, scored by wagon-tires, made rough going.

"Great Cæsar's ghost!" uttered Harry, as they rounded a shoulder.

High above them, before, was a portion of the procession: wagons, animals, and people, far aloft, zigzagging up a mountainside by another trail (or was it the same trail?), clinging for footholds and every now and then pausing as if to breathe.

Several of the wagons were drawn by eight and ten yoke of oxen; several of the wagons with one and two yoke were apparently stuck fast; teams and people

alike—particularly the pack animals and the people carrying packs—seemed to be having all they could do to advance yard by yard. Wagons also were descending, and raising immense clouds of dust.

"Do we go up there?" protested Terry.

"I guess," decided Harry, "that's where Jenny props herself with her ears."

Yes, the start of the climb was only a short distance ahead. The canyon almost closed, and at a sharp angle the trail zigzagged right up the steep flank of the mountain—not Table Mountain, but another, higher.

Jenny pricked forward her long ears, in inquiring fashion, and halted of her own accord to survey. Here at the base of the mountain other outfits likewise had halted: wagons unloading, or waiting for teams to return and help them up; pack animals having their packs readjusted; foot travelers sitting and resting while gazing upward.

The wagons descending were dragging behind them huge boughs, as brakes. These boughs raised the dust. From the zigzag the grinding of iron tires, the popping of whips and the shouting of drivers echoed incessantly.

Along the line in the canyon welled a cheer; and accompanying it there forged past, for the climb, a large party who must have numbered one hundred and fifty, mostly men. They were well equipped with horses, oxen, wagons and pack mules. Two men rode confidently in the lead. One was Captain William Green Russell; the other looked a little like him, but

had whiskers that flowed down upon his chest. A third man, who looked a little like both, but whose whiskers flowed clear to his saddle-horn, brought up the rear.

"The Russells!"

"Those are the Russell brothers and their party!"

The man who rode beside Captain Green Russell was said to be Dr. Levi J. Russell. The long-whiskered man at the rear was the other brother, J. Oliver Russell.

On and up toiled the Russell company, bound for the Gregory diggin's; and encouraged by the sight, the halted procession bestirred to follow.

"Jenny," appealed Harry, "are you good for it, if Terry and I shove?"

CHAPTER XI

RICH AT LAST!

Up, up, up, with Jenny digging in her toes, snorting and puffing and picking her way over the roughness of the worn rocks. Occasionally there was a brief level spot where one might stop and pant and rest. Indeed, this was a hard trail for anybody, man or beast, and Terry felt considerable sympathy for the laboring ox-teams and the straining horses that drew the jolting, groaning wagons.

The outfits descending seemed to have almost as difficult a time, for the wagons, their heavy brake-shoes smoking and their boughs dragged behind, enveloping them in dust, threatened to run over the teams.

But it was a stirring scene, although whether any of the people coming down were bringing gold could not be learned amidst such racket and confusion.

Part way up another friend was encountered. He was the wheel-barrow man, halted to breathe so as to be able to push his barrow to the next resting place.

"Tough sledding," he wheezed, as he sat upon his barrow handles and wiped his brow with a bandanna handkerchief. "Wust yet, but I'm bound to get there."

They left the wheel-barrow man behind. At every turn they expected to see the summit beyond, but the climb required over an hour and a half of steady work.

Here, on the top, they were high above Table Mountain.

"Whew!" gasped Harry. The top was flat, and they drew aside, while they rested. Everybody halted here to rest. It was a fine view. Down below, whence they had come, was the trail, with other outfits zigzagging up; and farther was the trail along Clear Creek, and farther, the Platte River; and farther, the plains, and Cherry Creek, and Denver and Auraria, all wonderfully sharp in the perfectly transparent air. The people at the foot of the trail and beyond looked like pigmies, and the wagons like toys.

Before, the trail stretched across the mountain top and appeared to aim straight into a tremendous wild country of much higher mountains, timbered with evergreens and capped with snow.

The gold-seeker companies were again starting on.

"Do we reach Gregory gulch today?" inquired Harry, of a returning party.

"No, sir; not by a long shot. 'Tisn't any use, anyhow. Every foot of ground is taken up. There are two thousand people in that gulch already, and the same in the other gulches. The Gregory folks have the best claims. Nothing left for us later comers."

The trail continued to follow a high ridge, amidst pines and bright flowers and grass; crossed icy cold streams where the ridge dipped; and by night had arrived nowhere in particular. So camp was made,

the pleasantest camp of the whole trip from the Big Blue valley, because the air was so fresh and pure, and the water and wood abundant, and the grass so sweet for Jenny.

"I reckon we're getting into the Promised Land," hazarded one of the Extra Limited's neighbors.

The next noon the mountain divide seemed to have been crossed; for at one side, far down, was Clear Creek again, like a silver thread traversing a dark seam that was a canyon. About two miles ahead it divided, and over the north branch hung a thin bluish film of smoke. The sounds of ax and hammer and ringing pick—yes, the faint sound of voices—drifted up.

Gregory Gulch? That must be it, under the smoke, for the procession was hastening, and presently down, down, down they all plunged, for the bottom where the north branch of the creek glimmered. This trail was as steep as the zigzag trail on the east slope. The wagons used boughs as drags; oxen and horses held back hard; and Jenny, bracing her forefeet, slid and pitched and grunted. Faster and faster they all moved —could not stop—until in twenty minutes they fairly tumbled, one after another, into the water and the mouth of Gregory Gulch!

"Well, I should say she was crowded!' exclaimed Harry.

He and Terry gazed, consternated. Gregory Gulch extended westward from the North Clear Creek; it was narrow and quite long, and all up and down the creek and as far as eye could see up the gulch, people

were swarming like bees, while the newly arrived gold-seekers looked on, bewildered.

Tents had been erected, cabins were rising, bough lean-tos served as other shelters; men were feverishly delving with spades, washing out the dirt in their pans, or dumping dirt and water into wooden boxes that rocked like cradles; and other men were searching the bottoms and slopes for vacant spots and there hurriedly driving in stakes. A few women were in sight —one woman was helping her husband dig; several were sitting in doorways or trying to tidy their premises.

No wonder that the newly arrived people were bewildered. Some grew gloomy at once and discouraged, but some waxed the more excited.

"First thing is to find a camping spot," proposed Harry, briskly. "And then to find our mine."

"How'll we find it?" asked Terry. "Where is the gold? I don't see any."

"This is Gregory gulch, is it?" queried Harry, of the nearest miner—a red-headed, red-stubbled little man squatting in mud to his ankles beside a trickling stream, and twirling a gold-pan. He was muddied all over his tattered trousers and red shirt, and also to his elbows.

"It is; at laste it's the Gregory diggin's." He spoke with a strong Irish brogue.

"Have you found lots of gold?" invited Terry.

"Oi? Not a cint, b'gorry—an' here's another empty pan." As if in disgust the little man straightened up and surveyed them. "But that's not sayin' Oi

won't. Oi've got a foine claim right under me feet. Did yez jist get in? Would yez like to buy a nice claim?" He eyed them shrewdly with his twinkling eyes set in his grimy, sweaty face.

"Not yet, thank you," responded Harry. "Where's the gold?"

"Gold? Faith, all yez got to do is foind it. Sure, ain't it here in Gregory gulch, an' don't yez see all the people diggin'? Didn't Gregory an' five men take out $972 in wan week from their vein, an' afterward sell for $2,100 an' lend the men who bought it $200 so they could go ahead?"

"Where are they? Where is that vein?"

"Up yonder on the side o' the gulch; but yez can't get annywhere near it, for the people an' the stakes. They don't want visitors. Jist drive your stakes where yez can, an' begin work. My name's Pat Casey. What might yez be called?"

They told him.

"Well, Oi'll see yez ag'in, boys," promised Pat, grasping his spade to refill his pan. "Who knows but in a few days we'll all be rich together?"

"All right, Pat," laughed Harry. So they left Pat engaged with his spade, hoping to strike it with the next pan full.

They toiled along, eyes alert for a camping spot. A tent bore the sign: "Groceries for Sail." Another was announced as "Miners' Hotel"—although where it slept its guests was a problem. Another tent, through the flaps of which might be glimpsed a woman, stated: "Back East Biscuits."

Dinner of course was a hurried affair. Other gold-seekers were still descending the hill and spreading out wherever they could. So no time was to be lost. They each slung on a gold-pan by means of a thong tied through a hole in the rim; and with pick and spade (Shep staying to mount guard) they sallied forth.

"I reckon," mused Harry, "we'll have to do like the rest do: scout about and whenever we see a goldish-looking spot, try it out."

"Dad showed us how to work a gold pan. I don't suppose we've forgotten," panted Terry, as they hustled.

"Yes, but he didn't show us how to find the gold," reminded Harry. "We ought to locate near water."

For an hour they trudged up and down, and never sunk a spade or tried a pan. All the creek and all the side streams seemed occupied. Once they halted and were just about to dig, when a voice bawled: "Get off my ground!"

"Excuse me," apologized Harry. The owner of the voice was some distance away. "Is this your claim?"

"You bet you! The best claim in the diggin's."

"How big is a claim?" demanded Harry.

"Well, a hundred feet by fifty and as much more as I can get. Now vamoose."

They "vamoosed."

"Two thousand people, claiming a hundred feet and as much more as they can get, doesn't leave much room for the rest of us," sighed Harry.

"Hello, there!" hailed another voice, more cheery. It was the "Root Hog or Die" professor. He also

was equipped for mining, but he appeared to be a wanderer like themselves.

"Have you struck anything?" asked Terry, as soon as they had shaken hands.

"Not a sign. Have you?"

"No. Can't find a place to dig in, even."

"This prospecting is more of a science than I had thought," confessed the professor. He looked tired out. "I've been at it since morning. I had an idea the gold would show on the surface."

"So did we," admitted Terry. "But the ground all looks alike—just common dirt!"

"Yes, even where they're actually washing gold out," said the professor. "I've seen some gold, though. I saw one miner with a pan that gave about a dollar and a half, and I saw a clean-up in a sluice that netted eight dollars."

"What's a sluice? One of those wooden troughs?"

"Yes; but lumber for them is hand-sawed and costs a dollar a yard, and people are asking as high as a thousand dollars for a claim. I believe it's cheapest to hire somebody to locate a good claim for a fellow. The Russells and Gregory and some others who have had experience are hiring themselves out at $100 a day, I understand. There goes Green Russell now."

"A hundred dollars a day! Whew!" gasped Terry.

Captain Green Russell halted in passing.

"Got here, did you?" he greeted, in friendly fashion. "Made your fortune yet?"

"We may be standing on it, for all we know," answered Harry.

"For all you know, you may," drawled Mr. Russell. "That's the trouble. The people come in here, like they do at Cherry Creek, and think the gold shows at grass-roots. But Gregory didn't find his lode by any pure luck, and the rest of us old-timers are here to teach the folks how, if they want to learn."

"Could you put me on a good claim?" inquired the professor, eagerly.

"Yes, sir; I'll prospect for you at $100 a day. You'd save time and probably money."

"All right. I'll go with you and we'll talk it over." And on strode the professor and his instructor.

"Hum!" remarked Harry. "The secret of making money is to have something the other fellow will pay for: sometimes that's goods, and again it's knowledge."

The gulch really was a fascinating place. Such a hive of industry—saw and hammer at work, as well as pick and spade; but amidst it all there seemed to be no place for the Extra Limited. A general disappointment was in the air, with so many persons working hard and as yet getting nothing.

"We'll travel 'round to Pat," quoth Harry, after a time. "He may have struck something by this."

As they approached Pat, he suddenly uttered a loud whoop, and danced a jig. His neighbors dropped their tools and rushed for him.

"Sure, Oi'm rich!" cheered Pat. "There's gold in my pan! Hooray! Rich Oi am. Half o' yez can look at a time till yez all are done, an' the other halves kape away so yez won't carry off me gold on yez feet."

Yes, in the bottom of Pat's pan was a trace of yellow, not to speak of a pebble about the size of a pea which he proclaimed to be gold also.

Scarcely hearing the congratulations, Pat fell to work again.

"Jiminy!" protested Terry. "We've got to stake out a claim somewhere, and have a mine ready for dad and George. Let's go clear up the gulch."

Pat's success was encouraging, at least. But as up the gulch they went, the crowd was no thinner, and presently Harry stopped.

"This pick and shovel weigh a ton," he said. "And so do my feet. I vote we knock off work, quit locating gold and try to locate supper. First thing we know it'll be dark and we can't find even Jenny and Shep."

"W-well," agreed Terry. "And tomorrow we'll start out again early. Wish I knew just what kind of dirt had the gold in it."

"That," quoth Harry, "evidently is the secret."

Scarcely had they turned to retrace their steps when another call hailed them. Somebody was running for them, from the other side of the gulch. He was a slim, muddy figure, in boots and trousers much too large for him, with long hair flapping on his bared head.

They paused and stared.

"Aren't you the Pike's Peak Limited fellows?" panted the boy.

"Why, Archie Smith! Hello, Archie!"

"I thought it was you, but I wasn't sure." Archie

was completely out of breath, and very red in his thin cheeks. He panted and coughed. "What are you doing? Prospecting? Have you struck anything? Do you want a claim?"

"We're looking 'round. No, we haven't struck anything yet," they answered. "Have you? How long have you been here?"

"Do you know of any good place to claim?" added Terry.

"Yes. And you won't have to drive a stake! When did you get in? Where's your camp?"

"Down yonder somewhere. We got in this morning."

"Gee, but I'm glad to see you," panted Archie. "Hurrah! Let's go to your camp and move your stuff. What you got? The cart? Didn't buy a tent, did you?"

"No. We came in with just the mule. Expect we'll fix up a bough hut till we strike it rich," explained Terry.

"No, you needn't. You're to stay on my place. I've got a cabin and a stove and—and——" here Archie lowered his voice, "boys, I've struck it rich, myself! I've got the best claim in these diggin's!"

"You have! How long have you been here?"

"About two weeks. Come on and I'll tell you about it. Do you know anything about mining?"

"No," they confessed, ruefully.

"I didn't, either," admitted Archie, as together they pressed on for Jenny and Shep and the packs. "So I bought a claim. There was a man here who couldn't

stay—he had to go down to Denver; and I bought his claim for only $500. First I'd prospected for myself, and didn't find anything, and then I came across him just in time. Gee, I was lucky. He wouldn't have sold, only he was obliged to get out. Of course, I panned samples of it before I bought, and in the very first pan there was four dollars' worth of gold! He sold me his cabin and stove and everything. Boys——" and Archie's voice sank again, "you may not believe it, but I've already taken out near $80, by myself, and I can't dig very long at a time, either."

"How'd you pay for it?" blurted Terry. "Did you have the money with you?"

"Yes. Our outfit had put in $200 apiece, for the trip across the plains, and we'd spent only half, and I carried that because I was treasurer. I paid for the stage ride from the station, though; but in Denver I worked at the hotel—and—and I nursed a gambler who was sick, and when he found out that I'd studied medicine he said I'd saved his life and he gave me $250 as a doctor's fee. But I'm not a regular doctor yet. Now you fellows are to come and work the mine. It's named the Golden Prize, and it's *yours!*"

Harry stopped short. Terry scarcely could believe his ears.

"What?" challenged Harry.

"Aw, get out!" scoffed Terry.

"But it is," insisted Archie. "I've been just praying that you'd come along. I didn't really save that gambler's life, though he was right sick. But you saved mine; and if he thought what I did was worth

$250, I reckon what you did was worth three or four times that because you risked your lives, too. And anyway, I can't stay. It's too high for me up here. I lose my breath. I feel a heap better down on the plains, and I guess I'll go back home for a spell. If I don't give the mine to you somebody'll jump it. There isn't anybody up here I can trust."

"But, great Cæsar!" expostulated Harry. "We'll work it, if you want us to, while you're gone. We won't accept it forever, though."

"I should say not!" affirmed Terry. "We can find our own claim."

"No, you can't. The trained miners are the ones who find the best ground, and you're not trained. All right: you can work it just as if it were your own, and you can have all you find till I come back."

"Cracky, but that will make us rich, won't it?" cried Terry.

"Of course it will. I've taken $80 in four days and I tell you I've just dug a little bit. It tires me all out to dig; and the water's so far. But you fellows can put in a sluice—I'll lend you enough dust to buy boards with, if you haven't enough——"

"We've got a little, and if we haven't enough we'll dig out more," declared Harry, quickly.

"And with a sluice running you can just *pile* up the yellow!"

"Whoop-ee!" cheered Terry, wildly. "We're rich at last."

CHAPTER XII

PANNING THE "GOLDEN PRIZE"

THE Golden Prize property appeared to be a very snug proposition. It was located about a mile up Gregory Gulch, and right in the midst of things. There was a good enough dug-out, set partly into the slope at the bottom of one of the rocky hills in the gulch, with log walls surrounding the single room and a sod roof. It contained a rusty stove (better than a fireplace) and a bunk and a slab table and a slab stool, all on a dirt floor. The cooking utensils were hung on the wall. The door, of split logs, like puncheons, swung by leather hinges and fastened with a wooden pin and latch-string.

But the mine of course was the most important. That was really the first thing to be inspected. Archie showed it rather proudly, although it did not look very imposing, being only a deep trench into the hillside just beyond the cabin.

Down the shallow side draw that helped to form the hill ran a small stream of muddy water, which finally joined the main drainage stream, below.

"You see," said Archie, "I have to carry all my dirt to that stream so as to wash for the gold, and, gee! but

it's hard work. About breaks my back. The digging and the climbing up and down are too much for me. A fellow ought to lead the water nearer, some way."

"Why didn't you?" asked Terry.

"I did think of digging a ditch, but that's an awful job, and I'd have to squat with a gold-pan just the same. I suppose if I'd stayed here I'd have built a sluice or hired one built. I couldn't build it myself, because the boards are too heavy to handle. And anyway, I want to go out. I can't breathe up here. I don't feel as good as when I came in, and mostly I just sit and puff. I felt lots better down on the plains. If I can't work the mine, what's the use in having it? But I'd a heap rather give it to you fellows than sell it to strangers."

"We won't take it, but we'll work it for you, on shares," again asserted Harry.

Archie stubbornly shook his head—and his thin cheeks were crimson.

"Nope. You can share together but you can't share with me. You work it and keep all you find; I owe it to you. I'm so tickled I can hardly see."

"Where do we begin?" cried Terry, excited. "Which is the best spot, Archie?"

"I'll show you in the morning. I'll show you everything," panted Archie, "before I go. We'll wash out some color, anyway."

"We'd better get our stuff unpacked before dark, Terry," reminded Harry. "The mine will keep. We know it's there. Whew, but this is a big stroke of luck. Doesn't seem as though we'd earned it."

Dusk settled early in the gulch, and by the time they had stowed their stuff away, and Jenny had been turned out to browse among the rocks and pines on the hillside, most of the camps in the gulch had ceased their work of the day and had changed to the work of the evening. Smoke was welling from chimneys and from open fires, far and near; wood was being chopped and men and women were cooking. The gulch suddenly seemed cheerful and homelike: a miraculous contrast with the dark timber rising above on all sides, where the wild animals, bear and bobcats and elk and wolves, probably sniffed in astonishment.

Harry made a big batch of flapjacks and a pot of coffee; Shep curled in a corner and snuggled for comfortable sleep; the air outside was chill, but within was warm, and a candle that Archie produced gave light enough to eat by.

Archie was awarded the bunk, for a good rest. Harry and Terry spread their beds on the floor. They were used to sleeping on the ground, but Terry found it hard to go to sleep. He wanted to talk—he fairly itched to be out with spade and pan, digging gold from "their" mine. Think of it! A mine, a genuine gold mine, at last! Now they could pay his father back easy, and also show him and George how to get rich.

"I know how you feel," said Archie, from the bunk. "They say that when Gregory discovered his lode after tracing it for miles, and found four dollars in his first pan, he kept his partner awake till three o'clock in the morning, talking, and he was still talking at breakfast time."

"Wonder how he discovered it," hazarded Terry.

"He just started in on lower Clear Creek, at the Platte, and kept panning, and panning, on up, until above this gulch the gold quit. Then he turned into this gulch, because it seemed to yield the most color, and the gold was the coarsest, and he kept panning and panning until the color quit again. Then he knew he'd come to the place where the gold below was washed from. So he went back to the Platte and got a partner; and they sized up the natural lay of the gulch, at the highest spot where the color had quit—and they struck rich diggin's with the very first spadeful. That was the sixth of May. After they'd located a lot of ground for themselves and their friends the news got out, and now look at the mob!"

"Well, I'll bet we've got something just as good," declared Terry, confidently.

Immediately after a hurried breakfast they started in to pan their own claim, under the direction of Archie.

"I've always found the most gold in that spot there," he instructed. "There was another spot, where I panned first, but it's quit on me. Expect, though, you'll find a lot of 'em. Let's dig and try out some of the dirt in our pans."

Into the spot Terry plunged the spade. The dirt was gravelly and soft—two strokes of the blade were more than enough to loosen sufficient for the three pans. The pans were sheet-iron and about the size and shape of a large milk-pan. In a moment they three were trailing down to the little creek, each with some two

inches of the dirt in the bottom of his pan. They squatted to fill the pans with water, and carefully twirled to slop it out again along with the dirt that ought to float off.

This was an anxious process. Archie finished first, because he was in practice.

"I didn't get anything this time," he announced, gaily. "But I don't care. I'm going out."

Terry's dirt had practically all flowed off. He picked out the bits of gravel—they were only pebbles and flakes of rock. He peered for yellow—yes, there it was! A glint mingled with a seam of coarse sand.

"I've got some!" he yelled. "See here? I've got some!"

Archie looked in.

"That's right. Let me finish it for you. I'll flirt that sand out."

So he did, with a dexterous twirl that sent part of the sand out and the rest against the sides, and left the heavier yellow in the middle.

"Reckon I've landed a little, myself," remarked Harry.

He had! Perhaps a trifle more than Terry, and the two pans together weren't enough to cover the point of the knife-blade with which they scraped the yellow up and carefully deposited it in Father Richards' old buckskin bag, brought for the purpose.

"Gold's worth $21 an ounce and that's about a pennyweight, I guess," encouraged Archie. "Ninety cents—but it's a beginning. Of course, where you dug I'd been digging before. You'll find a better place.

You see, I've already taken out $80. So go ahead and keep panning, and I'll travel."

Archie had arranged to leave with a wagon outfit who were disgusted because they'd discovered nothing. The two new proprietors of the Golden Prize stopped operations long enough to bid him good-bye, and watch him trudge away, his pack on his back.

"When you want some of your gold, come back or let us know," called Harry, after.

"It's all yours," he retorted. "That's why I bought the mine."

"Jiminy!" exclaimed Terry. "That's big pay for what little we did—just giving him a drink of water and toting him in a cart."

The next few pans didn't yield anything at all; then Harry made a "strike," as he called it, and scraped out as much yellow as would cover a finger-nail. He'd got the dirt from a new spot, "for luck," and from the same spot Terry managed to extract about as much.

"We'll have to try about," counseled Harry, "until we find spots like those of Archie's. We've got a lot of space yet."

As Archie had said, this digging and panning was hard work. At every stroke the spades clinked against rock—a boulder or a ledge—and to chip away with a pick was about as bad. And then, to trudge back and forth with the pans! But Harry hit upon the idea of dumping the dirt upon a piece of gunny sacking and thus carrying several spadesful at a time, to be panned.

They scarcely stopped for dinner, and by evening had greatly widened the trench. When they knocked

off for supper and sleep the buckskin sack was apparently as flat and as light as in the early morning, and they were mud from soles to waist. But nevertheless, the sack contained gold! Peeking in, one might see it!

"We'll have to get a pair of scales," proclaimed Harry. "And we'll have to go about this more scientifically. Panning's too slow."

"How much did we find, do you think?" invited Terry.

"Five dollars' worth, maybe—and we're hungry enough to eat five dollars' worth of grub. But that's all right. We're just starting in, and we own all the ground from the cabin to that little creek, and from half-way up the hill down to the bottom. Hooray!" He grabbed Terry and they war-danced, while Shep barked gladly.

"I'd rather dig gold than potatoes, wouldn't you, now?" demanded Terry. "We're liable to make a hundred dollars 'most any day. We haven't done much more than scratch."

"What do you want for supper?" asked Harry. "Let's celebrate with antelope steak and apple pie."

"Sure!" cheered Terry. "We don't have to save on grub."

They were sitting down, on the stool and the edge of the bunk, to a sumptuous supper, when a step and a grunting sounded outside, Shep growled, and into the half-open doorway was thrust an inquiring face. It was the red face of Pat Casey.

"Good evenin' to yez," he proffered, blinking.

"Come in, come in. Glad to see you. Sit and have

a bite." And Harry changed from the stool to the bunk-edge beside Terry.

Pat, muddy like everybody else, clumped in, agrin.

"Sure, Oi've had my supper, but Oi'll set a bit," he answered. "Oi've been a-lookin' for yez. An' are yez at home already?"

"Yes, sir-ee," pronounced Harry, triumphantly. "Here we are."

"An' have yez located? 'Tis the sick boy's property, ain't it? Oi saw him goin' out this mornin'."

"All ours now, till he comes back again; cabin, claim, everything."

"And we're to have all we find," added Terry. "We've panned over five dollars already and we're only learning. He took out $80, but there's the whole claim left yet: tons of it! We're going to put in a sluice and do a lot other improving and fix things up right."

"B' gorry, mebbe yez have a bonanzy," congratulated Pat. "Gold is where yez find it. Oi've washed out a matter o' wan dollar an' sixty-siven cints meself, but didn't Oi tell yez we'd all be rich together, some o' these days?" He sniffed and gazed over the table. "Faith, is that a pie? A genuyine pie?"

"That's what. Have a piece, Pat?"

"'Tis wan thing Oi can't refuse," admitted Pat, modestly. "'Specially apple pie."

Harry cut him a generous piece, and having dissected it with his knife into large mouthfuls, he accepted the invitation to finish the half; Harry and Terry ate the other half.

"Ye made it?" he inquired, of Harry. "Glory be! Sure, now, Oi wish ye were in the business. Couldn't ye make me a pie, occasional? Oi'll pay ye two dollars apiece annytime."

"Can't promise that yet, Pat," laughed Harry. "But whenever we have a pie you're welcome to help us eat it."

"Not me," protested Pat. "A rale apple pie is worth two dollars of anny man's money; an' if that ain't enough Oi'll pay ye more."

But of course pie was a small item in comparison with a gold mine that might yield $100 a day, under proper management. However, Pat lighted his short black pipe and spent the evening, and they all talked gold, gold, gold.

"I think," said Harry, after Pat had left, with much good-will and another reference to pie, and the two partners prepared for bed, "that tomorrow we'll make a tour around the camp, to see what other folks are doing, and then we'll know how to go about it the quickest way. Panning is too slow for *us*."

CHAPTER XIII

READY FOR BIG BUSINESS, BUT * * * !

WHEN after breakfast they started out, "for (as Harry said) the latest wrinkles in getting rich quick," the gulch was already astir and at work. And a busy, inspiring sight it was, alive from side to side and apparently from end to end with cabins, completed or begun, some plank-roofed, some roofed with pine boughs; with dug-outs, tents, wagons, oxen, mules, and with men digging, burrowing, toiling at spade and pick, squatting over gold-pans, or manipulating the boxes set on rockers, while the few women were attending to dishes or hanging out the family washing.

"Washing $3 a dozen," announced a sign in front of one tent.

The gulch was long and broken, and of course not half the sights were to be seen from any one point.

"Let's walk up a piece, first," suggested Harry.

So they did, in confident manner. Only day before yesterday they had come in as tenderfeet—not knowing a thing and not owning a foot of ground. Now they were regular residents, actual miners, with a paying claim and a cabin, and might hold up their heads. The very dirt on their clothes proclaimed their rank. Terry felt like a wealthy citizen.

The man who evidently owned the claim next above theirs paused to greet them. He was another young man, with a blond beard, and a smile that disclosed white even teeth, and although he was roughly dressed in ragged red flannel shirt, belted trousers and heavy cow-hide boots, his chest, showing under his shirt, which was open at the throat, was very white, and now as he rested his foot upon his spade and shoved back his slouch hat, his forehead also was very white.

"How are you, neighbors?" he accosted. "Made your pile yet?"

"No, sir," promptly responded Harry. "But it's right there waiting for us. All we've done is a little panning, and with proper development work we've got a bonanza."

"We sure have," supported Terry. "We panned out five dollars in color, first thing. But that's too slow."

The man smiled good-humoredly.

"You're in luck, then." He wiped his brow. "I haven't seen my color yet, but I suppose it's around in here somewhere. Anyway, I'm getting plenty of exercise. We're all crazy together. I expect I'm as crazy as the rest. You know what Virgil says—*facilis decensus Averni,* eh?" and he eyed Harry inquiringly. "Did you find that so?"

" 'Easy is the descent to Avernus,' eh?" translated Harry. "Hum! Well, we did come down in here at a good gait. How we'll get out again is a question. But you must be a college man."

"Yes, and also a preacher. 'Whom the gods destroy they first make mad' is another favorite reflection of

mine, among these diggin's. Are you a college man, too?"

"Yes; University of Virginia."

"I'm Yale. Glad to meet you. Well, it's a great place—all kinds of us jumbled and digging and sweating, talking gold and eating gold and dreaming gold, when most of us could accomplish more and make more where we came from."

"I reckon the thing we don't know how to do always looks easier than the thing we do know how to do," reasoned Harry.

"Exactly. But where are you bound for?"

"We're going to put in improvements," spoke Terry. "Do you know where we can get a sluice?"

"Make it, if you can buy the lumber. But you'll have to stand in line and grab the boards as fast as they fall from the saw. By the way, you don't object to my using that water, do you? I'm not certain whether it's on your land or mine; it's pretty nearly between, as I figure."

"We thought it was on our side, but use all you want, certainly," replied Harry.

They left the preacher to his digging and proceeded.

The farther they went up the gulch, the more intense seemed the fever for work, and the thicker the camps and people. Yes, and there was gold, too! Three men were operating a "rocker." This was one of those wooden boxes on rockers like a cradle; one man shoveled in dirt, another poured in water, a third rocked the box from side to side, and the water and dirt flowed out through a slot at the lower end.

The Golden Prize proprietors halted to watch. When the water and dirt had escaped, in the bottom of the box were to be seen several cleats nailed across, and caught against these cleats was gold! The men figured that there was eight dollars' worth right there!

Up here were a few sluices, too: the long troughs, also with cleats nailed across the bottom inside, to catch the gold as the water and dirt flowed over. Into some of the sluices water had to be poured by hand, but others led from streams and the water flowed through without having been dipped. The shorter sluices were called "Long Toms."

"That's what we want," decided Harry. "A regular sluice, running right across our claim."

"There's the wheel-barrow man!" exclaimed Terry.

And so it was, standing in front of a tent which bore the sign, "W. N. Byers. The Rocky Mountain News," and nearby was a stake and a sign: "Central City."

They shook hands with the wheel-barrow man.

"What's this?" demanded Harry. "A town?"

"Yes, sir! Mr. Byers has named it. It's the best location. Right in the middle of the Gulch."

"Is he going to stay here?"

"Nope; but he's pushing things along. What's happened to you boys? You look as if you'd been prospecting."

"We have," laughed Harry. "Haven't you?"

"Yes, a little." And he suddenly called: "Hello, John. What's the matter down there?"

"They've got wind of another strike," answered the

man, striding on. He was a black-bearded man, and seemed very busy.

"That's John Gregory himself," explained the wheelbarrow man. "The original boomer of this gulch. But watch the people pile out, will you!"

"Yes; there's a big strike south of here, I understand," from the doorway of his tent spoke Mr. Byers himself: a stocky, pleasant-faced man, with a close-trimmed brown beard. The diggin's had as great a variety of beards and whiskers as it had of people.

So he was the pioneer newspaper man, was he—the man who had brought a printing-press, and a stock of paper already printed on one side at Omaha, clear from the Missouri River to Cherry Creek. But Terry was given scant opportunity to stare. Harry clutched him by the sleeve:

"Come on, quick! I've got an idea."

Away they hastened, back down the gulch. Before, at the lower end, the confusion was increasing. Outfits were hurrying away—drivers swinging their lashes, men footing fast; camps were breaking, and on their claims miners and prospectors were shouldering pick and spade and pack and hastening after the procession now crossing the creek.

The movement spread up the gulch, communicated from camp to camp and claim to claim.

"What'll we do? Get more land?" puffed Terry.

"No, no."

But the lower end of the gulch was not by any means deserted, as they arrived. It was mainly the frothy overflow that had bubbled out, and when the eddy had

settled there appeared to be almost as many people as before. Even the claims which had been abandoned were being quickly re-occupied. However, Harry dashed to one man who had packed up and on his cabin was tacking a sign: "Keep Off!" while his partner waited.

"Going to leave?"

"Mebbe so. Want to buy this claim? She's a humdinger."

"No. But I'll buy your sluice. How'll you sell it?"

"That sluice? Seventy-five dollars."

"Whew!"

"It's forty feet long, of three boards; that means 120 feet, and lumber's $300 a thousand feet and you have to put in your order a week ahead. With the props and the cleats and the nails there's over $40 of material in that sluice, and I reckon the labor of hauling and building is wuth the balance."

"I'll give you $50," snapped Harry.

"Sold. But hurry up. We can't wait long here to sell a sluice. There's too much doing 'round the corner."

Harry fished out three gold pieces—two twenties and a ten—and passed them over.

"Better take it off this property quick or somebody else will," advised the man; and away he and his partner strode, for the strike in Bobtail Gulch just across a little divide south.

"Lucky again!" jubilated Harry—who, Terry saw, had been smart. "Cost a lot of money, but we couldn't have made it much cheaper ourselves and we'd have

been held up waiting for boards. You sit on it while I go for Jenny. We haul the whole thing at once."

"Maybe we could have got it for nothing, after they'd left," proposed Terry, with an eye to the general grab-all as various persons swarmed over the abandoned claims.

"It wasn't ours, was it?" retorted Harry. "But it is now." And he left at a fast limp.

He returned with Jenny, harnessed, and they triumphantly dragged away the sluice, carrying also the scissors props on which it had rested. Its joints indeed threatened to part, but by picking their path they arrived with it intact at the Golden Prize.

Their preacher neighbor greeted them with a wave of hand and came over to inspect.

"Looks as though you were going right into business," he asserted. "I thought maybe you'd join the rush for Bobtail."

"No, sir; we stick," assured Harry. "A bird in the hand's worth two in the bush."

"Well, depends on the bird," answered the preacher. "Now, my bird's an old crow, I'm afraid, and if I could see a fat turkey in the bush I'd drop my crow pretty quick, like those other fellows."

After dinner Harry rather ruefully examined his money belt. It was flat and limp.

"Ten dollars left," he said.

"And our dust, you know," reminded Terry. "We've the five dollars we washed out, and we can wash out more whenever we want it."

Harry brightened.

"That's right. We're rich. You can try panning again, this afternoon, and I'll go down to the grocery and lay in provisions and any other stuff we'll need, and then we can set up the sluice and pile up the gold. Got to have everything running before Father Richards and that George Stanton come in."

"We can buy a claim for them, too," proposed Terry. "Or find one that's been left."

"No crows," corrected Harry. "Turkeys only."

Terry went at his panning with enthusiasm, bound to make a showing. Panning was slow, but it was rather exciting because there always was liable to be something yellow right under your eye, if you looked close enough. Panning was a one-man job; you did it all yourself.

The preacher strolled over to watch.

"How's the dirt paying now?" he queried.

"Pretty good. I've found *some* more," truthfully answered Terry. "About a dollar's worth, I guess."

"A pinch, eh? How'd you like to take over my claim?"

"Haven't any money yet. I mean, we won't have money till we get the sluice to going."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," proffered the preacher. "Just to make the transaction binding, I'll sell you the claim for your next pan. Preaching is my business, not mining, you see. If you buy my claim, then nobody can accuse you of jumping it."

"All right," accepted Terry.

"Play fair, now," laughed the professor. "Take your dirt from a good rich spot."

Spots looked mainly all alike to Terry. The hole where he had been digging was laying bare the hard rock, but he scraped up a quantity of dirt and loose splinters from a crevice——

"You're giving me principally rock, aren't you?" criticized the preacher, good-naturedly. "But let it go. I'll be game."

However, as the pan cleared and Terry threw aside the splinters, they both exclaimed. Yellow was plainly visible—and moreover there was a blackish, cindery fragment the size of a crushed hazel-nut that glinted and weighed suspiciously as Terry lingered in the act of tossing it away also.

"Here! Hold on!" And the preacher took it. "Nugget, isn't it? Fifteen or twenty dollars, I'll wager—and ten dollars more in flakes!"

"That's a rich pan, boys, as I reckon," interrupted a voice, accompanied by crunching footsteps and a growl from Shep.

The speaker was a miner over six feet tall and broad in proportion—a veritable giant of a man, in clothes as rough as the roughest, and with a revolver at his belt. In his black-whiskered face his eyes were small and deep-set, and close together, or as close as an enormous nose would permit. He was carrying a sack on his shoulder, which he deposited in order to investigate the pan.

"Yes, sir-ee. A $40 pan, countin' the nugget. Does all your dirt run like that?"

"No, sir; not yet," replied Terry. "But maybe it will when we sluice it."

"Goin' to sluice, are you?" The giant's close-set little eyes roved about inquisitively. "This your claim, is it?"

"Yes, sir. This and the next one."

"Where'd you get that lucky pan o' dirt?"

"From that hole."

The giant strode up, carelessly poked about in the hole with his boot-toe, filtered some of the dirt through his fingers.

"You're down to bed-rock already," he pronounced, returning. "I calkilate you may have struck a leetle pocket, but I don't count much on these shallow slopes. Some gold ketches, most of it's washed down. He your partner?" and he indicated the preacher.

"No, sir. My partner's down to the store."

"Older'n you?"

"Some."

"Waal," and the giant picked up his sack, "you'll have most of your work for nothin'. May strike an occasional pocket, an' may not. You've got one o' them pore locations. Mostly rock." With that he stumped on into the little draw down which flowed the side rivulet. Once he paused, to cast a glance behind at the stream and the waiting sluice; and then he disappeared around a shoulder up the draw.

"We're no better off for *his* opinion," quoth the preacher. "Don't believe he's quite the style of a man I'd cater to, anyway. But our bargain holds, does it? I'll make you out a bill of sale."

"Sure," manfully assented Terry, trying not to regret that this was the one big pan.

Harry presently arrived, laden with purchases.

"Meat's fifty cents a pound," he panted. "We may have to eat Shep or Jenny. Flour's snapped up at $15 a sack, and milk's fifty cents a quart from the cows of some of the emigrants. Whew! Couldn't find any gold-scales; we'll do our weighing at the grocery store till the express office or post office is opened. Everything's payable in dust. But I invested in a treat for us; see?" and he produced a can of oysters! "That's our bank. The groceryman says oyster-cans are the popular things for holding gold, in the diggin's. It cost two dollars, but it'll be worth a heap more than that when it's full. I'm nearly strapped, though. Have you added much to our pile?"

"Added the preacher's claim," blurted Terry, and 'fessed up. "It was a big pan, too," he concluded. "I've found only a little color since."

"Color helps," encouraged Harry. "That will be a claim for George. Good! We can work both with the same water."

The preacher brought the bill of sale of the "True Blue" claim, as he had named it; and that evening they had him in to join them in making merry over the can of oysters. Harry thoroughly washed out the emptied can and set it aside to dry, for the "bank."

The "improvements" on the True Blue claim consisted of merely a few holes and a lean-to of pine boughs covered with a piece of ragged canvas. The preacher jovially carried away his personal belongings on his back; he was, as he expressed it, "traveling light."

Left in possession of both claims, the two partners decided to fill their oyster-can from the Golden Prize first, and they jumped into the work of setting up the sluice.

This proved to be a bigger job than it had appeared before being tackled. The sluice was heavy and had to be moved about by sections; and to place it conveniently and yet give it the proper slant, the ground had to be leveled or mounded or lowered; and a little dam had to be made, with a race or ditch to supply the water to the upper end of the sluice: and what with disconnecting, and shifting hither-thither, and re-connecting, and all that, two days were consumed.

There had been no time for panning, but now, at last, they might start in washing by wholesale, so to speak.

They lugged the dirt on gunny sacking to the sluice, dumped the dirt into the running water, and while Harry stirred it Terry followed down along the sluice to throw out the rocks and clear the riffles or cross cleats. A back-breaking and also muddy job this sluicing was, for the sackings of dirt were heavy and the sluice of course leaked at the seams and joints, so that the ground underneath was speedily soaked and made slippery by the constant trudging.

By noon the riffles were filled with gravelly mud, and Harry decided that they should be cleaned. So the water was turned off.

Now for the test!

"I see yellow! I see yellow!" asserted Terry, running from cleat to cleat, and eyeing the deposits against

each; and indeed it did seem to him that the little dikes glistened roguishly.

"You see more than I do, then," retorted Harry, rubbing his long nose. "What I see is more panning, after all, to sort that stuff."

They dug the lodged stuff out with their knives, and panned several cleatsful at a time. Harry found a nugget (small one); little by little the gold left in the pans increased (hurrah!), until, at the wind-up——

"How much, do you think?" demanded Terry, excitedly.

"Mighty near an ounce, and the nugget besides; say $40." Harry's dirty face was abeam. "And we've washed as much dirt in half a day as we could pan by hand in a week. At this rate we'll soon have both claims skinned to the rock, and'll need others. But I reckon we can find 'em, or buy 'em."

"Looks as though we were going to be powerful rich, doesn't it?" said Terry, awed by the very thought. "We'll fill our oyster can."

"Shucks!" remarked Harry. "I saw one sluice where they'd cleaned up $138 in a day—but there were four men working it, and they had more loose dirt than we've got. Our dirt's mostly rock. Anyway, we'll lay aside that $100 we owe Father Richards and have something to show extra before he and mother and the Stantons come in."

However, the afternoon clean-up netted them, although they had dug the dirt from a deeper place which looked very promising, scarcely color! And when early, before breakfast, in the morning, Terry

sallied out to survey about and plan for a big day, to his astonishment the rivulet was dry, except for a dribble!

CHAPTER XIV

PAT CASEY HELPS OUT

He hastened back to the cabin with his eyes popping.

"Our water's gone!"

"What!"

"It is. There's not enough to fill a tin cup!"

"Great Scotland!" And setting aside the skillet and dropping his fork, Harry rushed out to see for himself.

"Wonder if the blamed thing's drying up," he hazarded. "Well, we've got a pailful for drinking and cooking, anyway. And after breakfast we'll try to find out what's happened."

They had not yet explored the little draw down which the water drained; it was shallow and uninteresting; but they did not need to go far to find out "what had happened." Around the shoulder of the first bend they arrived at a branch draw on the other side of their low hill, and were in the midst of some more claims.

Water from a spring had been feeding the little draw and the branch draw both; but now a sluice had been set up, taking away so much that there was none left for the little draw.

Several men were at work with the sluice. They paid no attention to their visitors until Harry interrupted the nearest.

"Look here. You men have taken our water."

The man turned around short. He was the giant who had commented on Terry's big pan and on the condition in general of the Golden Prize prospect.

"What you talkin' about?" he growled. "Who are you an' where you come from? Oh, it's you, is it?" he added, to Terry—and Terry had the notion that he had known perfectly well who they were and where they were from, before speaking.

"Yes," answered Terry. "And this is my partner. You aren't leaving us any water for our own sluice."

"You have all that comes, haven't you?"

"We haven't all that ought to come, though," answered Harry, a bit sharply because the giant's tone was decidedly rough. "You've dug the ditch to your sluice higher up than necessary, and it lowers the level of the spring so much that no water enters our gulch at all. The stream used to split, didn't it?"

"Split nothin'. Trouble is, your gulch is runnin' dry. You ought to've figgered on that, now that the snow's all melted off and sunk in. Most of those little gulches dry up, come toward summer."

"The stream used to split, and feed through this gulch, just the same," insisted Harry. "You can see the channel. I hold that we're entitled to a share of this spring. And if you'd move your ditch a foot or two we'd get enough, and you'd have plenty yourselves."

"You're entitled to just what drains into your gulch, an' we're entitled to what drains into ours," growled the giant. "This water's in our gulch, ain't it—spring and all?"

"I don't know that it is, by rights," retorted Harry. "The spring's pretty close to being at the dividing point. And anyway, we're not asking you for your water; we're asking for ours."

"Now look-ee here," and the giant tapped his revolver butt: "By miners' law we're entitled to a share o' what water comes down our gulch, an' by miners' law you're entitled to a share o' what water comes down your gulch, alluz considerin' there's any to share. If your claim was wuth a picayune I'd advise you to hold on till next spring, when mebbe you'd get a leetle water again from natteral drainage; but as it ain't wuth a picayune I'd advise you to get off an' look elsewhar. Anyhow, you get off this ground mighty quick; for if you're huntin' trouble you'll find it in a bigger dose than you can handle."

"It looks to me like a deliberate scheme to run us off," began Harry, hotly. But he checked himself. "Come on, Terry," he bade.

"Did you see Pine Knot Ike?" exclaimed Terry, as they returned, with heads up, to their own ground. "I did—he was down below, with another man."

"Yes, I saw him." Back at their sluice again they stood undecided. Harry scratched his long nose and surveyed about. "Confound 'em! It's a dirty mean trick. If they'd change the head of their sluice ever so little we'd have enough water and so would they.

But they've fixed it so that when they shut off to clean up the water all flows the other way. Let's see. We can get water for the cabin from that creek down below. Might pan with it, too—only we'd spend most of our time carrying the dirt down or the water up."

But when they went down to the creek, to investigate, they were curtly told by a camper there that his claim and others extended all along on both sides, and that they were entitled to the water themselves.

"You can help yourselves to drinking water, and that's all," he granted. "I'm sorry, strangers, but if you're on a dry prospect I reckon you'd better get out."

"Not yet!" retorted Harry. "Not," he added to Terry, "as long as we can make *pie!* Come on. We'll find Pat."

They had not seen Pat Casey for several days. As they descended the gulch, it seemed busier and more crowded than ever. Five thousand people were here now, according to report, and all the surrounding gulches were thronged, also. Sluices were running, others were being set up—and the thought of their own dry, useless sluice, and the gold that *must* be waiting, and the way they had worked to prepare for getting it, made Terry half sick. His father would laugh, and George would be a pest. Yes, George would poke all manner of fun at them.

Pat wasn't where they had expected to find him.

"Pat Casey? The red-headed Irishman, you mean? He's across yonder, and he's struck it rich. You'll find him over there, strangers, washing out $50 and more a day."

So Pat had moved. He was waist deep in a trench that showed signs of soon being a tunnel; and when from the brink they hailed him, he clambered out. All mud and perspiration was Pat.

"B' gorry, Oi'm glad to see yez," said Pat. "Oi've been thinkin' o' yez, but what with gettin' rich Oi've no time for calls. Oi bought out the men who were gopherin' here, an' now the deeper Oi go the richer Oi am. Sure, yez are lookin' at a millionaire, 'most. An' how are things with you boys?"

They told him. Pat scratched his head.

"Too bad, too bad. An' a dirty trick. But, faith, there ain't water enough to go 'round, an' that's a fact; not sayin', though, that they're actin' square, at all. For they ain't. Are yez in need?" He winked. "Jist come into me house a minute."

He led them into his bough hut, and from underneath his bunk fished out an oyster can.

"Heft it, wance," he invited.

It was heavy.

"Help yourselves, lads," he insisted.

But Harry laughed.

"Not yet, thanks, Pat. We've got a little to tide us along. What I want to know is, how's your appetite for pie?"

"Two dollars apiece for pie, an' two pies a day: wan for breakfast an' wan for supper; an' on Sunday wan for dinner besides," promptly answered Pat.

"It's a go," pronounced Harry.

"Will it take the both o' yez to make pie?" queried Pat. "Sure, ye look like a husky boy," he said, to

Terry. "Let your partner make the pies, an' ye turn your hand to helpin' me at the sluice. Oi need another good worker. Oi fired the wan Oi had only this very mornin' because he sat down too frequent. Oi'll give ye a dollar an' a half a day, an' ye can fetch down me pies."

"That's a bargain," accepted Terry. "Wait till I get my spade."

When he and Harry arrived again at their own property they found the giant there. He was standing in their hole, and inquisitively poking about.

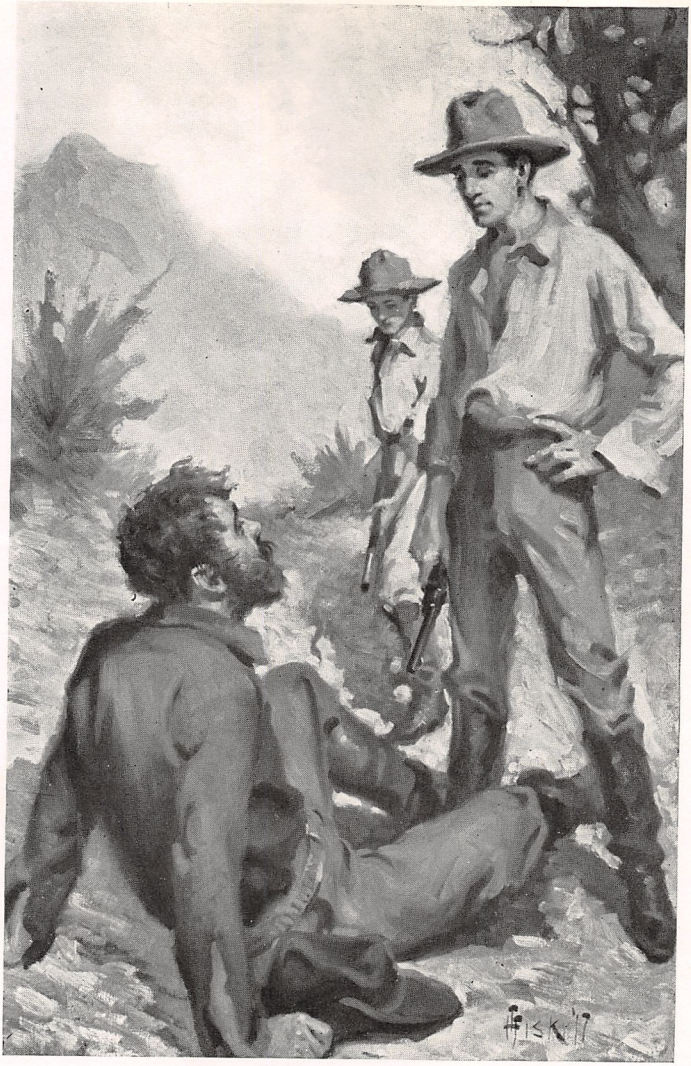
"Here! What are you doing?" challenged Harry.

"No harm meant," apologized the giant. "But you're down to bed-rock an' that's a fact. Still, a man might wash out a little dust, from spots, I reckon, if he had the water. Now, the truth is we're sorry for you boys. You've put consider'ble time an' labor in on this prospect, an' we're willin' to do the right thing. How'll you sell?"

"For how much?" demanded Harry.

"The property's no good to you; never would amount to anything great anyhow; it's too rocky. But I'll tell you what we'll do: We'll give you $100 for your claim, to save hard feelin's, an' we'll take the chance o' pannin' out enough when there's water, to pay us back. I expec' we'll lose, but we'd rather lose than have the hard feelin's. You get the hundred dollars an' the experience."

"We'll keep the experience and the claim, too; eh, Terry?" Harry answered. "And there's something you men can keep: you can keep *off*. What's that



"THE GIANT SAT DOWN WITH AN EXPLOSIVE GRUNT, AND HARRY STOOD OVER, SCARCELY PANTING, REVOLVER DANGLING IN HAND"

in your hand? A piece of our rock? Drop it!"

"Cock-a-doodle-do!" jeered the giant. "Mebbe I picked up this rock here an' mebbe I picked it up somewheres else. But I drop it when I get ready. You crow mighty loud for a young rooster without any spurs."

The giant was standing confidently agrin, resting at ease on one leg, his hand on his hip—but he did not know Harry. With a single jump Harry had reached him, quicker than the eye could follow had jerked the revolver from its scabbard and at the same time with a twist of the foot had knocked loose the propping leg. The giant sat down with an explosive grunt, and Harry stood over, scarcely panting, revolver dangling in hand.

"We wear our spurs on the inside, like a cat's claws," he said. "Now you sit there till you drop that piece of rock."

But the giant looked so ugly and menacing, as he glared about, that Terry flew to the cabin for the shotgun. He was back with it in a jiffy—and the giant was already slowly rising to his feet. He had dropped the piece of rock.

"'T isn't wuth sheddin' blood for," he grunted. "Your hull property isn't wuth the lead in a bullet. But I admit you did for me mighty clever. Where'd you l'arn that trick?"

"We're as full of tricks as you are," retorted Harry. "Here's your gun. You needn't keep him covered, Terry. He's going."

"Then you refuse our offer, do you?"

"Yes. You can't buy even the privilege of walking across this land for a hundred dollars or a thousand dollars."

"All right. You can squat here till you starve an' dry up, then. Mebbe you have the trick o' livin' on nothin', but I doubt it. I'd like to know that wrestlin' trip, though—I'll give you an ounce o' dust to show me."

"No, you can't buy that, either," laughed Harry.

"That preacher feller gone away?" queried the giant, with a jerk of the head toward the True Blue claim.

"Yes," said Harry, shortly. "He's quit."

With a calculating glance around, the giant stalked off. They watched him go. Harry picked up the piece of rock.

"Wonder what he wanted of this," mused Harry. "It doesn't look any different from lots of the other rock. White quartz, I reckon, with iron rust in it. We could have given him a bushel of the same. He didn't find it lying loose, though. He cracked it off from somewhere. That's a fresh break."

They searched about curiously a minute for the source of the fragment. It was a smooth knob, the size of a large walnut, showing rusty white at the fracture.

"We can't wash rock, anyhow," quoth Terry. "It just clogs up the sluice. We wash the dirt."

"And we can't wash even that now. It seems queer, though, that that outfit would want to buy this claim after saying it's worthless. You didn't want to sell, did you?"

"No," stoutly declared Terry. "Not unless we have to, to pay dad back."

"Not as long as we can sell pies and make day wages, at any rate," added Harry. "There are just as good ways of getting money as digging it out the ground. If those fellows bother us we've tricks for all their legs as fast as they bring 'em over." He stuffed the piece of rock into his pocket. "I'll keep this for luck," he said.

Harry alertly started in on preparations for his pie-baking; he had hopes of enlisting other customers than Pat. Terry shouldered spade and pick, and trudged off to help Pat.

He found Pat much excited.

"Have ye heard the grand news? No? Why, sure, the great editor man, Horace Grayley, be comin' to the diggin's! He's on his way already—him an' other cilibrated citizens all the way from New York. The boys are arrangin' a rayciption for 'em tomorrow; an' b' gorry, 'tis mesilf will have the honor o' lettin' the great Grayley, who be the editor o' the New York *Tribyune,* wash the gold with his own hands from this very pit. Faith, if Oi don't make his pans rich for him my name's not Pat Casey."

When that evening Terry, wet and dirty and tired, went home, the word of the approach of Editor Horace Greeley and party had aroused much interest through the gulch.

He found everything shipshape but quiet at the cabin, where Harry had baked several pies and a batch of bread and hung out some washing. A sign, of

wrapping paper and charcoal lettering, now announced:

GREGORY GULCH BAKERY
Apple Pie
Bread, Etc.
HARRY REVERE & CO.

CHAPTER XV

HORACE GREELEY COMES TO TOWN

THE Horace Greeley party arrived early the next morning, and breakfasted at the lower end of the gulch before proceeding upon an inspection of the diggin's. Their visit was deemed of the utmost importance, for, as Pat explained to Terry, they were here to see the gold with their own eyes and handle it with their own fingers, so as to print the truth in the New York *"Tribyune."*

Sure, whatever Horace Greeley said, the people would believe.

In order to make certain that the report would be a good one, it had been arranged to pilot Mr. Greeley to the richest of the claims, and invite him to wash from these for himself. Pat's was the lowest down and therefore the first—and now Pat seemed to think that the reputation of the gulch rested on his shoulders.

He had donned a fresh shirt, ahead of time, and evidently had tried to slick up generally. The water had been turned off from the sluice as if in preparation for a postponed clean-up.

"Take it 'asy," directed Pat, when Terry, having delivered the two pies contracted for, was about to spring into the pit and begin the business of the day.

"Let the sluice be, so His Honor can clane up some o' the riffles by himself. An' we'll jist be loosenin' the dirt a bit here an' yon, for the sake o' keepin' busy an' makin' the place convanyent for him."

In fact, Pat was so particular in "jist loosenin' the dirt a bit" that Terry suspected him of not wishing to soil his shirt.

"Well, I'm thinkin' they're comin'," pronounced Pat. "Out o' the pit with ye an' wash your hands an' face so ye'll be a credit to the gulch. Sure, ye might have put on a clane shirt yourself—but mebbe 'tis better wan of us looks like a hard worker."

Terry had a notion to retort that probably Harry was wearing the clean shirt; they had only three shirts for the two of them, and the extra ought to go to the cook, of course.

All around, the other miners were unusually busy, so as to impress the great Horace Greeley, but they kept an eye directed down the gulch. Now a party, on mule-back, were drawing near. They numbered half a dozen, conducted by John Gregory himself, and a little squad of onlookers trailed behind.

Occasionally they stopped, to survey operations; Pat, pretending to dig, awaited nervously.

"Mind ye, let me do the talkin'," he cautioned, to Terry. "An' be polite to His Honor, yourself. He's a great man. An' in case Oi ask ye to dig, take your dirt careless loike from the corner beside that white rock, for the rock's a lucky stone."

The party halted at Pat's pit and gazed in, and Pat and Terry, pausing in their show of work, looked up.

Besides John Gregory, there were in the party Green Russell and Mr. Williams, the stage company superintendent, and Editor William Byers of the *Rocky Mountain News,* and—yes, Mr. Villard, the Cincinnati reporter.

Terry did not know whether Mr. Villard would remember him, or recognize him, anyway, in those clothes, which were much worse than when worn in Denver.

"This is one of our promising gulch claims," was saying John Gregory. And—"Good morning to you, Pat," he addressed. "How are things looking with you today?"

"Foine, thank ye, John," assured Pat.

"Come out a minute, Pat. Mr. Greeley, I want to make you acquainted with Mr. Casey, a leading citizen of the Gulch. And Mr. Richardson—Mr. Casey. And Mr. Villard—Mr. Casey." Pat, who had clambered out, removed his hat and rather bashfully shook hands.

So that was Horace Greeley, was it; the editor of the New York *Tribune!* He didn't look like an editor of a big paper such as the *Tribune.* Rather, with his square hat and his rosy face surrounded with a fringe of short white whiskers, and his roly-poly figure, as he sat his mule, his legs sticking straight out, he looked more like a church deacon or a prosperous "back East" farmer.

Mr. Richardson, who probably was that reporter for the Boston *Journal,* as spoken of by Mr. Villard in Denver, was a tall, wiry man with soft hat and full brown beard, and wore a Colt's revolver.

"These gentlemen are out from the East, Pat," continued John Gregory, "to see if it's true that we're all starving hereabouts and that the gold is in our eye. Mebbe you've no objection to their doing a little investigating on their own account down in your hole there."

"Faith, Oi'd be proud if their Honors would touch their fingers to me dirt," asserted Pat. "Would they loike to get down in, or shall Oi pass a bit up to 'em?"

Mr. Greeley and Mr. Richardson and Mr. Villard dismounted and peeked in.

"About how much are you washing out a day, Pat?" invited Green Russell.

"Oh, a hundred dollars a day, more or less, dependin' on the clane-ups," answered Pat.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Greeley, adjusting a pair of spectacles, the closer to peer. "I was scarcely prepared to find that a fact."

"You're ready to make a clean-up, I see," spoke Mr. Byers. "Suppose you show Mr. Greeley and these other gentlemen. How long will it take?"

"A matter o' two hours," replied Pat. "But would His Honor loike to try a pan, first? Sure, a pan or two from the pit, an' a couple from the riffles—that's a fair tist."

"Yes, I believe I should like to see the evidences of a pan," declared Mr. Greeley.

"There's no need of His Honor gettin' down in," averred Pat. "It's no place for the feet of a gintleman. Terry, me lad, pan a spadeful, will ye, an' show Mr. Grayley the color so the New York *Tribyune*'ll tell the world all about it?"

Something in the slant of Pat's eye reminded Terry to dig his dirt from beside the white rock in the corner; seizing the spade, he did so, and dumped into the pan always handy. The ditch that fed the sluice was only a few steps from the shallow edge of the pit. Squatting over it, Terry deftly panned the dirt. No one could have done it better—and the result certainly was amazing. Terry handed up the pan, but he scarcely could believe his eyes. Mr. Horace Greeley would require no 'specs to see *that* color!

"Between two an' thray dollars, Your Honor," assured Pat, as amidst exclamations the remarkable pan was passed about. "Even a boy can get the rale stuff in these diggin's. Will Your Honor keep the dust for a token? An' will ye be after tryin' a pan for yourself? Sure, everything ye find is yours."

"You might try a pan from the riffles of the sluice, Mr. Greeley," suggested Mr. Byers.

"I will." Mr. Greeley promptly rolled up his sleeves, and settled his square hat more firmly on his head. "Let me have the pan, if you please." He carefully scraped the color from the pan and deposited it in a buckskin bag that he carried. "Where shall I take from?"

"Annywhere, annywhere, Your Honor," bade Pat.

"Why not about the middle, Mr. Greeley?" proposed Journalist Richardson. "That would be fair."

"Let him alone, gintlemen," urged Pat. "Let His Honor do it all himself. Come out, Terry, lad. Ye'll be gettin' in His Honor's way."

That was not one bit true, because Mr. Greeley

would not be anywhere near Terry. However, Terry trudged out, to please the anxious Pat; and now Mr. Villard hailed him.

"Why—hello, Pike's Peak Limited! I thought that was you. Where's your partner, and how are you making it in the mines?" He shook heartily with Terry, in spite of the mud on Terry's clothes—not to speak of considerable on Terry's hand.

"Harry's up at the cabin. We're doing pretty well, thank you," answered Terry.

"Well, I should rather say you were, if you wash out two and three dollar pans! I was hoping to see you. Mr. Richardson has a message for you. Richardson, this is one of the partners in that Pike's Peak Limited outfit you've inquired about."

"Oh, yes." And Mr. Richardson, the Boston journalist, also shook hands with Terry. "Glad to meet you. Mr. Greeley and I passed some people on our way out by stage. That is, they spent the night near us, at one of the stage stations. They asked us, if we saw the Pike's Peak Limited boys at the diggin's anywhere, to say they were coming. There were two families traveling together. One was Mr. and Mrs. Richards——"

"They're my father and mother!" exclaimed Terry.

"And the other was Mr. and Mrs. Stanton, and a boy and a little girl."

"I know 'em!" cried Terry, excited. "The boy's name is George and the girl's name is Virgie. The Stantons are near neighbors of my folks, in the Big Blue Valley. Are they near? When'll they get here?"

"Oh, they were some distance out yet," smiled Mr. Richardson. "But they had spanking good teams and were pushing right through. They'll——"

"Ha, ha! Watch our old friend Horace! He acts like an expert," laughed Mr. Villard.

For Mr. Greeley, after having deliberately selected the packed dirt from several of the riffles at the middle of the sluice, was proceeding to wash his pan at the ditch.

"Why, His Honor might have been in the diggin's all his life!" praised Pat. "Sure, isn't he a Californy Forty-niner?"

Mr. Greeley was not so swift in his motions as a skilled prospector, but he evidently knew the correct method. He dipped, and tilted the pan, and twirled out the dirt and water; and peered, and dipped and twirled again.

Each time that he peered he seemed to be more interested, and his smooth, chubby face grew redder.

"Have you struck it rich, Mr. Greeley?"

"Upon my word!" And straightening, he returned with the pan held close under his nose. "Marvelous! If this is gold—and I judge that it is—these are very rich diggings indeed."

They all crowded forward to inspect the pan. The bottom of it was absolutely yellow!

"Hurrah for Mr. Greeley!" congratulated the other journalists, and hands patted him roundly on the back.

"Gold!" proclaimed Pat. "Faith, an' if 'tain't a twinty dollar pan I'll ate it. Wance I washed out siventeen dollars myself, but never a pan like that

from mere a few riffles. Keep it, Your Honor. Would ye like to try ag'in?"

"Oh, no, no," declined Editor Greeley, considerably flustered as he painstakingly transferred the flakes and dust to his buckskin sack. "This is proof enough. Now I have worked with my own hands and seen the results with my own eyes—I have the results in my very pocket! Nobody can gainsay the richness of these new Western mines, and the truth shall be announced to the world as far as my paper can carry it." He smiled boyishly on Terry. "I beat you, my son, didn't I? Well, well!"

"This is one of the Pike's Peak Limited boys, Mr. Greeley," explained Journalist Richardson. "You remember a party of emigrants on the trail sent word by us to them, in case we ran across them at Cherry Creek or elsewhere."

"Yes, yes. That is so," and the great Horace Greeley extended his hand to Terry. "You must be Terry, then—the son of that Mr. and Mrs. Richards in one of the wagons."

"Yes, sir," answered Terry, wondering how Mr. Greeley could remember. "They're my father and mother. The other outfit lived on the next ranch to us in the Big Blue Valley."

"And they had another boy, and a little girl beside," said Mr. Greeley. "That's good. I'm glad to see young blood entering this vast new country of the United States. When I return to New York I think I shall print as a motto: 'Go West, young man; go West.'"

After shaking hands again with Pat, the Horace Greeley party rode on up the gulch, for further investigations. Pat respectfully watched them; then he clapped on his battered hat and faced Terry with a droll wink.

"B' gorry, that was good wages for an hour's work. Oi'm thinkin' Mr. Grayley'll be wishin' to sell his *Tribyune* an' dig in the dirt along with the rest of us here."

"I should say!" agreed Terry. "Jiminy, this is awful rich ground! I didn't know there was so much gold in here, did you? We must have opened up a regular layer yesterday."

"Don't ye tell anybody," whispered Pat, "but Oi opened up me oyster-can a bit, an' sprinkled a few pinches jist to make the visit by His Honor the more interestin'. Sure," continued Pat, "ye wouldn't want a man like the great Horace Grayley to soil his hands for mere a dollar or two, would ye? An' it's all right. The same gold came out o' here in the first place, an' wance Oi tuk siventeen dollars an' fifty cents from a single pan, myself. He might have done as much without my help, if he'd struck the proper spot, an' I only made matters 'asy for him. Now he can print the news with an exclamation point. Well, let's clane up the sluice, an' give back to the oyster-can what's due it an' more besides."

CHAPTER XVI

TWO TENDERFEET ARRIVE

WORD was spread through the Gulch for a mass-meeting this evening to listen to a speech by Horace Greeley; but of far more importance, in Terry's mind, was the news that his father and mother and the Stantons were on the Pike's Peak trail! Yes, sir; coming! They must have cut loose sooner than expected. But when would they arrive at Cherry Creek?

Mr. Richardson had not said; still, he had said that they were well equipped and were "pushing right along." They could not have arrived yet, of course; the Greeley stage had got in only two or three days ago, and the stage coaches traveled mostly at a gallop and fast trot so as to cover fifty miles a day, including stops for dinner and sleep. The best teams could cover only twenty miles a day. Anyway, they were coming, and he was wild to tell Harry—and Shep.

So as soon as he might knock off work on the Casey claim he bustled to the cabin, and unloaded the news.

He and Harry united in a war dance. Shep barked.

"That," quoth Harry, when they had quieted down again, "is a joke on us." He rubbed his long nose and surveyed Terry quizzically. "Which of us will wear the clean shirt, to receive them in?"

"Dunno," grinned Terry. "But if they don't get here pretty quick there won't be any extra shirt. And one of your boots is plumb gone, already!"

"I know it," admitted Harry. "I'll have to make moccasins. But we can't get clothes till we pay our debt."

"No, sir!" agreed Terry. "We'll have to get that hundred dollars ahead, first." For upon this they were determined.

"We sure will," confirmed Harry. "We wrote that we were rich with a gold mine, and told your father the hundred dollars would be waiting here for him, and a lot more besides! Huh!"

"They think we're rolling in wealth," asserted Terry. "Now they'll laugh."

"No, I don't believe they'll laugh," said Harry. "We did make a long brag, though. But chances are they didn't get that letter before they started. We'll write them, to Denver, and just say we're doing well. Then they'll know where we are."

"George'll laugh," insisted Terry. "He'll laugh when he finds you're cooking pies and I'm working by the day for Pat Casey! I told him I'd have a claim ready for him, so he could start in digging."

"Ha, ha!" cheered Harry. "Well, we've got the claims, haven't we? And he can dig all he wants to. We're doing the best *we* can. You're earning a dollar and a half a day, and I'm the champion cook of the diggin's—I sold three pies and a batch of biscuits to-day, all for dust."

"How much've we got in our oyster-can, I wonder?"

"Quite a lot, after you've been paid off," alleged Harry, cheerfully. "But trouble is, flour and apples and soda and salt cost so plaguey much—and we have to eat, ourselves. So that means coffee and meat and —pshaw! But not a stitch of clothes do we buy, mind you, till we're square with Father Richards."

"Don't believe Dad'll need the hundred dollars," declared Terry.

"Maybe he will and maybe he won't," answered Harry. "But we let on we had a bonanza, and now we've got to make good. That's the joke."

"Shucks!" bemoaned Terry. "We can't go down to Denver or Auraria in these rigs, to meet real folks. We look like—like—I don't know what. Your pants are split clear across the knee."

"No worse split than yours," retorted Harry. "And my best boot is better than your best one!"

"We'll have to stay out of sight in the mountains," asserted Terry, "till we get enough dust to buy clothes with."

"Well," said Harry, "here's where we belong. We're all right for Gregory Gulch—and we don't know when to meet the folks, anyway. By the time they turn up we may have our can heaping full from my pies and your wages, or we may be regularly sluicing out the gold from the Golden Prize and the True Blue, and go down to Denver in time to put on broadcloth and brand new boots!"

"If we only had water," sighed Terry.

"That's the one thing that keeps us from being millionaires," sighed Harry. "And it's one thing or an-

other with most people—or else we'd all be millionaires. Counting up beforehand is the easiest part of getting rich."

"Just the same, I know this much," blurted Terry. "Some day all of a sudden George Stanton will come straight into this gulch, with his pick and spade, looking for the gold that he'll say we promised him."

"Then we'll put him to work baking, or digging with you and Pat," laughed Harry.

The mass meeting that evening to hear Horace Greeley speak was a great affair. Everybody went—that is, everybody who wanted to. Clothes did not matter. At least 2,000 people gathered, and they wore all kinds of garb, from buckskin to rags. They stood about, or sat upon the ground and stumps and logs; and Mr. Greeley, in a long whitish coat, addressed them, after having been given three cheers.

He said that his day's trip through the diggin's had convinced him that this was a gold region as rich as California, and now he was of the opinion that a new State should be formed. He urged the miners to work hard and faithfully, and not drink or gamble. It was work instead of gambling and running about that would make them successful. He hoped that they all would live honest, upright lives, just as though their home folks were with them; and if anybody would not so live, he should be placed upon a horse or mule and told to ride and not come back. He said that one purpose in his visiting the Pike's Peak country was to find out the truth regarding the mines; but that another purpose was to cross the continent and get information

that would hasten the building of a railway—the Pacific Railway, to extend from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean!

Hooray for Horace Greeley! And again hooray!

Mr. Richardson spoke, and so did Mr. Willams, the Pike's Peak Express Co. superintendent, and others. They all were cheered, also.

"It's funny we don't see Sol Judy anywhere, isn't it?" remarked Terry, as after another rousing round of cheers for the visitors, and the Gregory Diggin's, and a new State of Jefferson, the meeting broke up. "I thought we might 'spy him in that crowd."

"So did I," admitted Harry. "But he'll turn up again. He always does."

The Horace Greeley party spent the next day in the diggin's, and then went back to Denver. It was understood that they had decided to make a favorable report to their papers, saying that there was plenty of gold to be found by those who knew how to find it; but that people who were doing well in business and on their farms in the East ought to stay there instead of starting off on a wild-goose chase.

"That's right," supported Harry. "Only about one person in ten in this very gulch is making any money mining. The rest of us are just living and hoping."

He continued his cooking, and Terry continued to work for Pat. That was hard work, too—all day in the muddy soil, digging, and dumping the heavy spadesful into the sluice, and stirring, and running along to follow the dirt down, and once or twice each day cleaning up the sluices. But Harry had no easy

job, either. Fire wood was getting scarcer and needs must be carried farther—and the rusty stove burned a terrible amount. And water must be carried up by the bucket. And Jenny must be attended to, so that she should have water and grazing. And the washing done. And the meals got, the same as ever. And there was the worry over obtaining a supply of flour and dried apples—especially the dried apples, for the pies.

The pies contracted for by Pat were the chief source of income in the cooking line, although occasionally Harry did sell a pie or some bread to other customers. But more women were arriving in the gulch, and they, too, did cooking.

The oyster-can grew heavier only very slowly. What with the high prices of flour and apples and other stuff, and what with the amount of provisions they ate themselves, there really was not so much profit in cooking, after all.

But toward the last week of June Harry calculated that the dust in the oyster-can was approaching the $100 sum. And now they both began to wonder again when the folks and the Stantons would appear.

Then the not unexpected occurred.

Terry was deep down in Pat's pit and toiling lustily, and was already mud and dirt from crown to soles, when from above somebody hailed him. George Stanton, of course! Not only George, but Virgie, too. They were peering in, George afoot and Virgie from the back of the Indian pony that last year had been captured from Thunder Horse, the mean Kiowa.

George wore a natty buckskin suit, and his revolver,

of make-believe wooden hammer; and with a blanket roll on his back, and a new pick and spade on his shoulder, and a new gold-pan slung at his side, he evidently was all prepared for business. Virgie wore a sunbonnet and a cleanish gingham dress. They both looked so spic and span that Terry realized how different he looked, himself. But with an instant whoop of welcome he clambered out to shake hands.

"Hello, George! Hello, Virgie! Cracky, I'm glad to see you! When did you get in? Where are the folks?"

"Down in Denver," answered George. "Virgie and I came up with some people we met on the trail. Is this your mine? Did you find one for me, too?"

"You're awful dirty," accused Virgie, wiping her hand on her dress.

"I reckon I am, Virgie," agreed Terry. "So'd you and George be, if you weren't tenderfeet. How'd you know where to find us? Did you get our letters?"

"Yes; got the one you wrote from Denver—got it at Manhattan, just as we were starting. We came through in twenty-one days. Your dad and mine have a cracking good team apiece. And we got another you wrote to Denver from these diggin's. Found it waiting for us. Is this your mine? Where's Harry? Did you discover one for me? Where's the gold? We hear you've struck it rich! The folks sent us up to see. Do you want them, too?"

"Who told you we'd struck it rich?" demanded Terry.

"A sick boy down at Denver. He heard us asking

for our mail, and asked if your father was any kin of yours. He says he knows your mine; it's the Golden Prize, and it's a bonanza; regular humdinger! So I was looking for it, and I saw the top of your hat, and I told Virgie: 'There's Terry Richards' hat, and I bet he's under it!' Is this the mine? Is that other man working for you? Where's Harry? Shall I get down in and dig, too? I'm not afraid of dirt."

"Naw, this isn't the Golden Prize," confessed Terry, bluffly. "It's another mine—belongs to Pat Casey. I'm helping him. But I'll quit and take you over to the cabin. 'Tisn't far. Wait till I tell Pat."

Pat likewise was out of the pit, and had visitors: two men talking at him hotly and gesturing with their fists, while Pat responded in kind. They all seemed to be having an angry argument.

"Oh, Pat!" appealed Terry. "I'm going over to the cabin a minute, if you don't mind. I've got some friends to show about."

"Sure, go on," bade Pat. "Stay the mornin', if ye like. There'll be no more dirt turned on this property till afternoon ag'in, annyhow—barrin' Oi don't start a graveyard in your absince."

That was an odd remark, but Pat appeared to be so enraged at something or other newly come up that Terry did not delay to interfere farther.

"All right; let's go," he said to George and Virgie.

He led off; George stumped behind, weighted with blanket roll, wooden-hammer revolver, pan, and pick and spade; Virgie followed on her pony. Terry, in his mud and ragged clothes, felt like an old-timer, as he

conducted these "tenderfeet" to the cabin home in the busy gulch.

"Golly, there are a lot of people in here, aren't there?" panted George, impressed by the many curious sights. "Are they all making their pile?"

"No, I should say not, yet. But they're all trying."

"How much do you think you've got already? A thousand dollars?"

"Uh-uh. We haven't weighed it; haven't any scales."

"I want to see some gold," piped Virgie.

"I'll show you some when we get to the cabin," promised Terry.

"Is Harry at the cabin?" queried George.

"Yes; we'll surprise him."

"What's he doing? Is the cabin at your mine? Is he mining there while you're mining at that other place? Who's Pat Casey? Why don't you and Harry mine together?"

"I guess he's cooking. Somebody has to cook," explained Terry. "And clean up."

"Well, you need cleaning up, all right," asserted George. "Reckon you'd better not let your mother see you in *those* clothes! She'd have a fit."

"Aw, we old miners all dress like this," retorted Terry. "It's only tenderfeet who fix up."

"Nobody'd take you for a millionaire, that's sure," scoffed George. "Say!" he added. "You sold Duke, didn't you? I saw him in a show, there at Denver—or Auraria, I mean, but it's all the same thing. What'd you do that for? They're going to match him with a bear as soon as they can find the bear—have a fight!"

"Oh, shucks!" deplored Terry. "Did you see Thunder Horse's head, too?"

"Was that Thunder Horse? Didn't look like him now! Where'd they get his head? Thought Pine Knot Ike had it. You said so in your letter."

"Yes, he did have it on the trail. But Mr. O'Reilly bought it for the show. And Pine Knot Ike's in here. He's with a gang not very far from us."

"I don't like Thunder Horse, and I'm hungry," piped Virgie.

"We'll have something to eat in a jiffy," comforted Terry. "There's the cabin."

"Which one?" queried George.

"That one with the sign on. See? On that little rise."

"What does the sign say—'Pike's Peak Limited'? Or 'The Golden Prize'?" urged George. "'Golden Prize Mine,' I bet."

"I see Harry! We're going to s'prise Harry," rejoiced Virgie.

That seemed evident, for Harry was sitting against the cabin wall, under the sign, and busily engaged.

"He's panning gold, isn't he?" exclaimed George, excited.

"Naw," said Terry, weakly. "He's panning dough, I reckon."

"Oh, look!" cried Virgie.

For Harry had sprung up at the approach of another man around the corner of the cabin—was telling him to get out—the man would not go—jumped for Harry—got the pan of dough square on the head—

and they closed and swayed, wrestling. Shep appeared, to circle and bark and snap.

Virgie screamed.

"That's Pine Knot Ike!" gasped Terry, jumping forward.

And George, dropping pick and spade and ducking from his blanket roll, fairly streaked it, shouting and flourishing his wooden-hammer revolver. He easily beat Terry.

Suddenly Pine Knot Ike went staggering from one of Harry's clever trips, and saw George and the big revolver. Away he lunged, legging it and making an odd sight with his head and shoulders plastered by dough, and Shep nipping at his trousers' seat.

"You'd better get," threatened George, pursuing, "or I'll shoot you into little bits!"

Harry quickly drew back his arm and threw—the piece of rock struck Ike between the shoulders. Whereupon, as if thinking that he really had been shot, Ike uttered a loud yelp, gave a prodigious leap, and legged faster.

"Bang!" shouted George.

When Terry and Virgie arrived, George was returning, considerably swelled up with the triumph of his wooden-hammer gun, and Harry was laughing.

"There go four dollars' worth of dough and my pocket piece. Howdy, Virgie? Hello, George! Much obliged. Where are the other folks?"

"They're down at Cherry Creek. We came——"

"What was the matter? What'd he want?" interrupted Terry. "The big lummix!"

"I don't know. He was hanging 'round—I 'spied him poking about on that other claim yonder, and when I ordered him off with the shot-gun he said something about 'taking it out of my hide.' So he sneaked in on me when I wasn't looking. I don't think my hide would pan out much, but he might get good color out of Terry's and my clothes."

"Aw——!" blurted George, who now had read the sign. "'Gregory Gulch Bakery! Harry Revere & Co.'! What do you mean by that? I thought you had a gold mine!"

"So we have," chuckled Harry. "At two dollars a pie, and a dollar and a half a day loading Pat Casey's sluice."

George indignantly flung his hat on the ground.

"But I didn't come 'way out here to bake pies or work for a dollar and a half a day," he accused, as if they were to blame. "We-all thought you were rich, and I was going to dig on my own hook and get rich, too."

Virgie, who did not understand, but sensed a disappointment, began to wail.

CHAPTER XVII

ANOTHER CALL FOR HUSTLE

THEY calmed Virgie, George stalked out and glumly brought in his brand new pick and spade, and during dinner Harry and Terry tried to explain.

"You see, we've got our mines ready, all right," concluded Terry, "but we can't work 'em."

"Why don't you make those fellows give you water, then?" demanded the spunky George. "Let's all go over there tonight with our guns and open a ditch. If my gun would shoot I'd go alone."

"Trouble is, their guns do shoot, I reckon," drawled Harry. "And another trouble is, the water all around is petering out anyway. That stream below is scarcely a trickle. Pretty soon we'll be carrying our drinking and cooking water from Clear Creek, and that's a mighty long tote."

"Pat says there's talk of digging a big ditch and fetching water into the gulch from a river over yonder," informed Terry. "But it will cost money, and anybody who uses the water will have to buy by the inch."

"Why don't we wait for it?" proposed George. "You've got some money saved up, and you're making

more, aren't you? Your father didn't say anything about wanting his hundred dollars. He grub-staked you, on a chance."

"Yes, and his chance is powerful slim," retorted Harry. "He can do more with the hundred dollars than he can with a dry prospect. A hundred dollars is all we've been offered for it, and so his half interest amounts to only $50, and he'd lose out. We'll pay him what we borrowed and we'll do the waiting."

"Did they sell the ranches?" asked Terry.

"Part trade, and the rest is to come out of the crops. Guess they haven't got very much cash yet," answered George.

"That settles it," pronounced Harry. "When you go down you can take our dust. I reckon there's near a hundred dollars."

"I'm not going down, for a while," declared George. "I'll throw in with you fellows. Guess I can find something to do."

"What!"

"That's right," and George stubbornly wagged his head. "Maybe I won't get rich, but I can stick. I can dig around here, can't I? And tote water and help with the cooking?"

"Hurrah!" cheered Terry. "He can have the True Blue and dig there; but I shouldn't wonder if Pat would hire him. We need another man."

"I can dig better than I can bake," admitted George. "I'll do something to earn my keep. I mean to stay and help out, Virgie can go back in the morning with those people who brought us in. They're just looking

about. Where does the True Blue lie? Can I have it? Have you dug much there?"

"No. It's a drier claim than this. The water was on our side, so we thought we'd clean up the Golden Prize first."

"How much land is the True Blue?"

"One hundred feet long and fifty feet wide, same as the Golden Prize. We run one hundred feet from the cabin and into that little draw, and then the True Blue begins."

George stood up and gazed. His new property did not seem to impress him very favorably; and indeed it was not especially inviting, being a bare rocky slope, pitted here and there with the shallow prospect holes of the preacher.

"Shucks!" he criticized. "It's mostly dirt and stones. I haven't got even that trough."

"You mean 'sluice,'" grandly corrected Terry. "'Trough' is a tenderfoot word. All you can do is pan, anyway, with a bucket of water. But I've got to go back to Pat."

"Might as well ask him for a job for me, will you?" responded George. "I'll take it unless I strike things rich first, and can make more money panning."

Terry trudged away. George helped Harry with the dishes, then carried a bucketful of water to his claim and proceeded to "mine." This was working under difficulties, and Virgie, who had followed close after, proudly lugging his spade, soon returned.

"I don't think that's much fun," she stated.

"Well, it isn't," agreed Harry. "And 'most of the

folks who expected to get rich easy think the same way."

Presently George gave up, out of humor. He was not only tired, but hot and grimy, too.

"There's not a blamed sign of gold in that whole claim," he crossly declared. "You fellows got cheated. You can have it back again. I'll dig for Pat Casey. Will he pay me a dollar and a half a day?"

"He ought to pay you the same he pays Terry. That's three dollars a day for you two, and four dollars a day for me, and some days I make five—one day I made seven, and on Sundays I'm sure of six——! Why, there's a gold mine in itself. We'll be flying high," encouraged Harry.

George braced up. But——

"Huh!" he grunted. "'Tisn't a pound a day, though."

"Terry's coming," piped Virgie.

So he was—not only coming, but bringing his tools with him, and also a decidedly disgusted aspect.

"Don't you work any more?" called George. "Doesn't he want me?"

"Naw!" growled Terry, throwing down his pick and spade. "He's busted. And he doesn't want any more pies, either. Here are the last two. He can't eat 'em—says he has indigestion."

"Well, don't step on them," warned Harry. "We can eat them. But how is he 'busted'?"

"It isn't his claim," answered Terry. "That is, maybe he doesn't own it at all. Some men he was arguing with this morning say it's theirs. So nobody'll

work there till things are settled up. And Pat's as mad as a hornet. They say all the dust in his oyster-can is theirs, too, because he got it out of that hole."

"Whew!" mused Harry. "The Extra Limited & Co. seem to be more limited than ever. And that's hard luck for Pat."

"What'll we all do, then?" queried George, aghast. "Light out and go down to Denver?"

"Not by a jugful!" And Harry swung the two pies. "We're here to stick. I reckon three able-bodied men and a dog and a nice yellow mule can earn a living somehow."

"I'll stay," asserted Terry.

"So will I," asserted George.

"I'll stay. I'll help Harry cook," proffered Virgie.

Harry picked her up and kissed her.

"No, you can't, Virgie. You go to the folks and tell them we're well and hustling and never say die, and pretty soon we'll be millionaires. But you see you can't stay with us, because we're liable to be traveling 'round, looking for the gold, and we may have to sleep in the rain, and sometimes there won't be much to cook."

Virgie wept. She was only a little girl, you know.

"But I want a mine," she said. "Don't I get any mine?"

"Of course you do," assured Harry. "You can have the mine George was working on. It's named the True Blue. George doesn't want it. And it's a real mine—see those holes?"

"Sure. You can have it, for all of me."

Virgie's tears dried instantly.

"All right. I'll dig in it." And off she hurried, with George's pan, in a moment to be occupied poking into the dirt with a stick.

"Let's hold a council, boys," proposed Harry. "Pat was my best customer, for pies, and I don't think I'll bother any more with this cooking business. I reckon we'll have to make a tour of the diggin's and offer the services of three men and a mule. Jenny'll need to help, if she expects to eat. There's not much free grazing left around these claims."

While they were discussing ways and means, Virgie toiled in from her "mine," carrying the empty pan.

"I sha'n't dig any more," she announced. "I'm tired."

"What have you got in your hand, Virgie?"

"A piece of my mine," and Virgie extended her prize. "I'm going to take a piece of my mine down to show papa."

"That's a good idea," approved Harry. "Take him a sample, so as to prove to him."

"Is it gold?" invited Virgie.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Harry, kindly. "It looks just like the pocket-piece I threw at Ike. Wait. I'll see."

But although he searched among the stones and bushes at the place where the pocket-piece might have bounded from Ike's back, he did not come across it, and neither did Terry nor George.

"It was the same kind of quartz, though," he insisted. "Where did you find your piece, Virgie?"

"Over there," answered Virgie, vaguely. "I don't remember. Can't I have it? Isn't it gold? That's a gold mine."

"Maybe it is gold, from the True Blue mine. You can tell your father you mined it," bantered Harry.

"Goody!" And Virgie tightly clutched it. "And I can buy Duke with it. They're going to make him fight a bear and I don't want him to fight a bear."

"What's that?" Harry's voice rang sharply. "Who said so?"

"Sure," affirmed George. "We saw him, in a show. And there's a sign up telling folks to bring in a bear and have a match."

"Great Scotland! Why didn't you mention it before?" Harry was visibly disturbed.

"I did, to Terry."

"Yes, he did, but I'd forgotten," supported Terry. "I was intending to speak about it, but these other things put me off the track."

"What'd you sell him for?" taxed George. "Shouldn't think you'd have sold him. He's awful peaked, shut up there."

"Well, we didn't sell him for that, anyway," declared Harry. "Good-bye. You fellows stay here. I'm going."

"Where?"

"Down there—to Denver and Auraria. We'll go and rescue Duke, won't we, Virgie?"

"*You* don't need to go, do you? The folks can rescue him. We'll tell Virgie to ask them to," proposed Terry. "They'll do it."

"No, sir!" rapped Harry. "I got him into that mess and I'll get him out if it takes every cent we have. We can pay Father Richards by selling the mine, if necessary; but Duke sha'n't fight any bear. That wasn't the bargain." And he bolted into the cabin.

Terry gazed at George; George solemnly gazed at Terry. It was a day of sudden changes in plans.

"Shucks! Duke oughtn't to be made to fight a bear, though," murmured Terry.

"I should say not—I call that downright cruel," agreed George. "But the bear wasn't there yet. Anyway, maybe the man won't sell."

"He'll have to, if Harry once gets after him. And the folks will help now," reminded Terry, hopefully.

"I'll help," chirped Virgie. "I'll help with my mine."

Harry bustled out. He had his blanket and a small package in some sacking.

"Of course there's no use in the rest of you going," he said. "I've taken most of our 'pile,' Terry, but I've left you a pinch of dust and the two pies, and there's flour and stuff yet. I'll leave you Jenny, too. You and George and Jenny can be getting me a job while you're getting for yourselves. I'll be back as soon as I save Duke from being bear meat. If you can't find any paying jobs here, sell the blamed old claims, and we'll prospect in better diggin's. Climb on your pony, Virgie. Tell 'em good-bye."

"You mustn't sell my mine," objected Virgie, from the saddle of the Indian pony. "I don't want it sold."

"Well, they can sell the Golden Prize, if they have

to," laughed Harry. "So long, fellows. You'll see Duke and me later."

Away he strode at rapid limp—dear old Harry!—with Virgie on her ambling pony keeping pace beside him, into the gulch and on.

"Guess we'll have to rustle," spoke Terry, to George, as they watched him and Virgie out of sight.

CHAPTER XVIII

NEVER SAY DIE!

GREGORY GULCH was now very different in appearance from that same gulch into which the Extra Limited had entered about a month ago. It resembled a noisy, booming new town. Almost every foot of lower ground was occupied. A great deal of the timber had been cut from the ridges and slopes, to be used in cabins and sluices and for fuel; and the axes were merrily ringing, in tune with the staccato of hammers and the thud of picks.

More families had arrived, so that women were frequently seen, and some of the cabins looked exceedingly "homey." There were many more grocery stores and general supply stores, in tents or log buildings. Where Editor William Byers' tent had stood, half-way up the gulch, town lots for the new Central City had been staked out and were selling as high as $500 apiece!

Flour was $20 a sack of 100 pounds, eggs were $2.50 a dozen, and milk fifty cents a quart. But money was very cheap, and prices seemed to cut little figure, for were not men digging, digging, digging, and emptying their dirt into rockers, or carrying it in gunny sacks

and in sleds over pine-trunk tracks, to their sluices, and washing out the dust (some of them) to the amount of $200 a day?

At night the hundreds of camp fires lighted the gulch redly from side to side; and already there had been a great forest fire, on the new trail in from the Platte, which had burned to death three men and a dog.

The trail itself was lively, said George, with gold-seekers still trudging into the mountains, singing, "I'm bound to the land of gold," and under Table Mountain had been started, on Clear Creek, a town named "Golden City." It contained about thirty cabins and nearly a thousand people, living in the cabins or camping!

And Denver and Auraria were booming, also.

Amidst such apparent prosperity it did seem as though persons anxious to work could find work that would pay. But the trouble was that Gregory Gulch had become over-populated. The newcomers asserted that the old-timers, like the Gregory crowd, had located too much ground, and that the claims ought to be cut down from one hundred feet to twenty-five feet, so as to give more people a chance. This movement did not prove out, because when a miners' meeting was held, to make changes in the regulations, the old-timers put in their own men as officers and won.

Consequently, what with the high prices of food and lumber, and the many claims that yielded scarcely anything, and the constant rush to get other claims wherever possible, a lot of people were glad to turn their hands to any kind of work.

Terry and George tramped clear up the gulch, in-

quiring at sluice and rocker and prospect hole, and even at tents and cabins.

"Need any help?" Or: "Do you know of a job we can get?" Or: "Could you use a couple of husky boys around here?"

Some parties were so busy that they only shook their heads, without pausing. Others directed them on, or to right or left. But after having volunteered in vain as miners, carpenters, and even as wood-choppers, they reached the head of the gulch, and turned back.

"Well, guess we'll go down to the other end," sighed Terry.

"This sure is a tough proposition," said George, using professional language. "Anyway, we've got enough to live on for a day or two, haven't we? Wonder when Harry'll be back."

"He won't come back till he has Duke; you can depend on that. Maybe he hasn't money enough."

"He can borrow from the folks."

"He won't, though. He'd rather work and earn some more."

"You can sell your mine, can't you, if you have to?" asked George. "He said sell it. And we can sell the True Blue. I'd as lief."

"We gave it to Virgie," reminded Terry.

"Aw, she wouldn't care. It's no good, is it? It doesn't own any water."

"Well, 'tisn't as good as the Golden Prize," admitted Terry. "Maybe we'll sell the Golden Prize and find something better. But I'd like to wait till Harry comes. I'd hate to sell it to that Pine Knot Ike gang."

"They offered you $100, though, didn't they?"

"Y-yes," admitted Terry. "It's better than nothing, of course."

They two (for Shep had been left to guard the cabin) were retracing their steps by a slightly different route down the opposite side of the gulch, so as not to miss any chances, and now came upon the wheelbarrow man.

"Why, hello, young Pike's Peak Limited," he greeted. "How's the gold-seeking business?"

"We're not gold-seeking, we're job-seeking," explained Terry. "Do you know of a job for a couple like us?"

The wheel-barrow man appeared to have packed up. His blanket roll and a fry-pan and tin cup were laid ready in front of his closed cabin.

"What's the matter? Didn't your prospects pan out?" he queried.

"We haven't any water, so we quit. Then I worked for Pat Casey, and he quit, and we can't even sell pies," confessed Terry.

"Where's your other partner?"

"He went down to Denver and Auraria, to buy our buffalo back. They're trying to match Duke against a bear."

"Pshaw! That so? I'm going down to Denver myself, to look about in time before snow flies. I understand it begins to snow up here in September, and everybody'll be driven out."

"What'll you do with your mine? You've got one, haven't you?" asked George.

"Sure pop, young man. And it's recorded, too, on the district books; and if anybody jumps it while I'm gone there'll be a heap of trouble for him. It's in black and white, described according to miners' law. Say—if you boys really want to work, you go on to Gregory Point, near the mouth of the gulch, and maybe you can get a day's work, or several days' work, on the new church they're putting up there for a preacher."

"Come on, George," bade Terry. And—"Much obliged," he called back. "Where's your wheel-barrow?"

"Played out at last. Don't need it, anyway. Can carry all I've got on my back."

"What's 'recorded'?" queried George, as they hurried off. "Are our claims recorded?"

"Don't think so," puffed Terry. "Nobody told us to record 'em. They're ours, and we've been sitting on them right alone. I'll ask Harry when he comes back."

"Or we can ask Pat Casey," proposed George.

They did not find Pat. His pit was idle and he was away—hunting witnesses to the sale by which he had bought the prospect. But they found the church, or rather the site of the church, on Gregory Point, as that was called, near the mouth of the gulch. Already a platform like a floor had been constructed; several men were busy hauling logs and leveling the ground with spades for another building; and the Yale preacher from the True Blue claim had his sleeves rolled up and was working with the rest. It was to be his church!

He warmly welcomed Terry, and shook hands with George also.

"Yes, indeed; plenty of work here," he jubilated—and Terry's heart beat expectantly. "We need strong arms. Bring along ax and spade, and pitch in. But," he added, "everything is donated, of course. The labor, material, ground—all is a gift to help the good cause. The people in the gulch are mighty generous, and their payment will come in this opportunity regularly to worship God instead of always worshipping gold. They can't live in a civilized fashion without a church. So the quicker we have such a place, the better. What do you say? Want to help?"

Terry looked at George; George looked at Terry.

"I'd rather do that than do nothing," blurted George. "Only——"

"So would I," answered Terry. "But you see," he said, to the preacher, "those claims have played out——"

"That's too bad," sympathized the preacher. "Both of them?"

"Yes, sir. We can't mine 'em till we have water. The water's gone. And our jobs busted, and I reckon we'll have to earn our keep. But we'd as lief help here till we strike another job."

"All right. Bully for you! To work once in a while for something besides money never hurts anybody," assured the preacher. "I have to do a lot of that myself. Bring down your tools whenever you feel like it. I expect some of the men will be working here all night because they can't spare the time during

the day. We're going to finish the church and my cabin before Sunday. But maybe you'd rather wait till morning. It's nearly supper time now. Come after supper, though, to the prayer-meeting. We hold the first prayer-meeting, around this platform. And I'll want you to join the Sunday-school."

They left the enthusiastic preacher and his volunteers building the first church in the diggin's.

"Might as well go home, I guess," remarked Terry.

Twilight was empurpling the hills when they arrived. This had been a lively day, but not a very successful one.

"Anyway, we've got enough to eat," quoth George. "And if we work on the church that may lead to something else. We'll keep busy."

"Sure," agreed Terry. "Keep a-going, as Harry said, all the way out. Keep a-going."

By the time that they had finished supper and washed the dishes the gulch was again redly outlined by the hundred camp fires. The sounds of axes and picks and saws had ceased, and there arose the hum of conversation, broken by shouts and laughs and occasional bits of music.

As they stumped along their way to the prayer-meeting (which was quite an event) they passed a tent where somebody was playing the violin—and farther on, in a cabin, a group of men were singing "Home, Sweet Home," to the tune of an accordian.

The prayer-meeting was being held, sure enough. There on the point was the platform, lighted by torches and surrounded by a throng of people sitting on the

ground and stumps and boxes and logs, listening to the preacher. Or—no!

"That's the Lord's Prayer! They're all saying the Lord's Prayer!" uttered George, awed.

So they were—or at least from this distance the cadence sounded like the Lord's Prayer, repeated in unison by those whiskered men of flannel shirts and high boots and revolvers and by the tanned women in shabby calico dresses. A great sight that was—and a very good sound, for these parts or any parts.

"There's another meeting!" whispered Terry, for he did not feel like speaking aloud when the Lord's Prayer was being recited. "Haven't got two preachers, have we?"

For just below the prayer-meeting a man was standing in an open wagon and addressing another crowd. He was talking fast, the listeners jostled and craned, and the flare of the pitch-pine torch planted on the wagon lighted their hairy, up-turned faces.

"We'll have to go and see," uttered George; who, as a tenderfoot, was eager to see everything.

Presently the words of the man in the wagon-box could be heard above the refrain of the Lord's Prayer around the platform. He was somebody whom Terry never had noticed before in the gulch—a thin, slab-sided man with carroty hair and beard and dressed in prospector's clothes; wore a revolver; no preacher, he. Certainly not, for——

"Yes, gentlemen," he was saying, "not more'n fifty miles from here there's a place where every one o' you can wash your pound o' gold dust to a man per day.

Me and my partners are the first white men in there; we've made our locations and our laws and have started a new camp that'll be a world-beater. Tarryall, we've named it; in the big South Park: the best and richest country on the face o' the earth. As soon as I get provisions here I'm goin' back in, and I'll take any o' you who want to go with me, on the understandin' you'll respect our rights as first locators. There's plenty room, gentlemen—and a pound o' gold a day per man waitin' to be dug. It's yours, gentlemen, if you want it. We'll welcome you to Tarryall. Only fifty miles to fortune, remember. I'll show you the way, but I start early in the mornin'."

The crowd jostled excitedly. On the outskirts George clutched Terry hard by the sleeve.

"Let's go!" he exclaimed. "Did you hear? A pound a day! That beats these diggin's. Cracky! I knew there was some place where a fellow could dig his pound a day. We can go and make our strike, and then 'twon't matter whether we sell these claims in here or not."

"All right; let's," agreed Terry, fired with the same idea. "We'll locate for ourselves and Harry, too; or if they won't allow boys to locate in their own names we'll locate in Harry's name and my dad's and your dad's! Harry'd never go to any of those other big strikes—the Bobtail, or the one in Russell Gulch, or a lot more. We've stuck here, when we might have been getting rich somewhere else."

"Come on back to the cabin and pack up," urged George.

They turned, when a voice at their elbow stayed them.

"Got the fever again, have you?"

He was the "Root Hog or Die" professor.

"Guess so," grinned Terry. "You've been away, haven't you? Did Green Russell find you a mine? Do you know that man in the wagon? Has he made a big strike?"

"Never saw him before and don't know anything about him," answered the professor. "Yes, I've got a few prospects, but I'm holding them for more water. Just now I'm recorder for this district. They elected me only the other day. How are you doing? Where's Harry?"

"We're waiting for water, too. He's down at Denver, but he's coming back. Will you record our claims? Do we have to record them?"

"No, you don't have to. It might be safer, though. But I can't record them tonight. The books are locked up. What are they?"

"The Golden Prize and the True Blue. They're over there."

"I know. You look me up at the office first thing in the morning and we'll record them."

"We won't have time. We're going to follow that man in the wagon to the new strike," explained Terry. "Nobody'd said anything about recording until this evening. But we'll be back."

"Well, I'll make a memorandum, then," proposed the professor, "so you'll be safer. Nobody's liable to jump your claims while you're gone, if they can't be

worked. The gulch is full of such claims. But you look me up as soon as you can."

"All right. Much obliged," replied Terry. "Maybe we won't want those claims after we've been to the new strike."

"We'd better be going. We've got to find Jenny and pack our stuff," urged George, impatient.

"Good luck to you," called the professor, as they hastened away.

"I d like to surprise Harry with a regular gold mine, by the time he sees us again," uttered Terry.

"Sure. We'll leave a note in the cabin saying we've gone to get rich," enthused George.

CHAPTER XIX

TO THE POUND-A-DAY

THERE was very little time to be lost. When in the morning they had eaten breakfast and had packed Jenny (who did not seem to object to a change from doing nothing all day) with a buffalo robe and a blanket and the picks and spades and cooking stuff and some provisions, and had placed a note for Harry—"Gone to get rich. Will see you later"—and sallied down the gulch, Terry with his shot-gun on his shoulder and George with his wooden-hammer revolver at his belt, and each with a gold-pan slung on his back, the procession for the new diggin's already had started.

It looked quite like business, too—a long file composed of men riding horses or mules, and of men driving pack animals, and of other men afoot and carrying their packs, pressing south, out of the gulch, evidently following the lead of the Tarryall man.

"Once we locate our pound of gold a day, these other diggin's can go hang, can't they?" puffed George, as they hurried.

"I should say!" concurred Terry. "All we'll do will be to come back and get Harry and sell to that Pine

Knot Ike crowd, and then we'll light out again. Glad we didn't say where we're bound for. When we sell we can pretend to Ike that we're plumb disgusted."

"Sure. Let's push up in front."

They were fast-footed and Jenny was long-legged, and they passed one after another of their rivals, until they were well toward the van. The wagon-man guide could be seen in the advance, guiding up a steep divide between the North Clear Creek and the South Clear Creek. The route appeared to be by an old Indian trail; and the divide itself grew into a mountain. Higher and higher led the trail—a tough climb that made the procession straggle.

It was a great relief when the trail conducted down again, on the other side, to South Clear Creek, and crossed, and turned up, through a beautiful country, to a couple of lonely lakes. But presently it began to climb over another mountain!

Terry limped, George limped, everyone afoot limped, no stop had been made for lunch. Everybody was afraid that somebody else would get to the pound-a-day first.

"Wonder how far we've come now?" panted George.

"You're a tenderfoot. You're petered out already!" accused Terry. "We aren't half there."

"I don't limp any worse than you do," retorted George.

"Keep a-going."

"Keep a-going."

On top of this mountain they all in the advance ran into a snowstorm, while the people lower down, be-

hind, evidently were warm and comfortable. Then night fell—a real January night—and camp had to be made.

However, George was game. He proved to be a good campaigner, for a tenderfoot; and as an old-timer Terry of course needs must pretend that this kind of camping was nothing at all. So they pitched in together and cooked supper like the rest of the crowd, and went early to bed on top of the blanket and underneath the buffalo robe.

"Jenny won't thank us any for bringing her from summer right into winter, I reckon," murmured George, as he and Terry spooned against each other, to keep warm.

"No," replied Terry. "This 'pound of gold a day' song doesn't mean anything to her yet. But it'll be warm down in Tarryall, they say—just like back at the Gregory diggin's."

"We ought to get there tomorrow."

"Depends on how many more of these mountains there are," reasoned Terry. "Without that Tarryall man to guide us we'd all be lost, sure."

On and on and on, into the south and southwest, continued the march: down and up, across more creeks, across more mountains, into canyons and out again; and when night arrived, no South Park and Tarryall diggin's were yet in sight. Nothing was in sight but thick timber and wild rocky ridges extending to snow-line. Near or distant, before, behind, on either side, the landscape was the same.

"A few miles, boys, and we'll be there," promised

the Tarryall man. "'Bout tomorrow noon, say. Then for your pound a day."

"Seems as though that pound of gold a day was always ten or forty miles ahead of a fellow," complained Terry. "First it was at Cherry Creek, then it was at Gregory Gulch, and now it's somewhere yonder. He said fifty miles, and I bet we've hoofed a hundred and still we haven't struck it yet. Guess Harry and I'll have to sell the Golden Prize so as to get us some boots. Look at mine!"

"We'll make moccasins or trade for some with the Injuns," consoled George. "When you're getting your pound a day you won't care."

The straggling procession was well worn out by two days of long, hard marching afoot and ahorse, and most of the animals were foot-sore. But tonight's camp was more cheerful, because the new diggin's lay close before, over the next divide. Yes, the Tarryall man had promised truly, for about eleven o'clock in the morning the head of the procession shouted and cheered and waved.

"South Park, boys—and Tarryall's in sight!"

"Hooray!" cheered everybody, as the news spread back from mouth to mouth and ear to ear.

"Gwan, Jenny!" bade George, clapping her on the gaunt flank; and driving her, he and Terry limped faster.

Because they were boys they had been well treated, on the way over, but now when new diggin's were so close at hand they might expect no favors. Every party must rustle for itself.

"Jenny! Gwan! Do you want to be left? Gwan! Hep with you!"

"Hep with you!" echoed Terry.

Jenny did her best; before and behind, the other outfits were doing their very best—crashing recklessly through the brush and timber and sliding and tumbling over the rocks. The head of the procession had disappeared over another little rise—perhaps was already in and at work locating the best pound-a-day claims!

"Jenny! Jenny! Yip! Gwan!" urged George and Terry. And with their rivals treading on their heels they, too, mounted the little rise, gained the top, and now in the clear could gaze anxiously beyond.

"I see it! I see the camp!" exclaimed Terry.

"So do I. But, whew! this is a big place, isn't it?" puffed George.

South Park was indeed large, and also beautiful; being an immense flat, miles wide and miles long, grassy and green and dotted with timber patches and bare round hills—yes, and with buffalo and deer, too! —and well watered by winding streams and the snows of high encircling mountains. The sight might well make one gasp, but another sight should be attended to first: that of the leading gold-seekers spurring their horses and mules diagonally across in a race for a glimmer of tents set amidst willows and pines against the west edge.

And pellmell, hobbling and shouting and straining, all the ragged company strung out after.

"If we won't be first, we won't be last, just the same," panted Terry.

The Tarryall diggin's resolved into three or four tents and several bough huts along a creek where it formed a broad gulch as it issued from the mountains. The gulch was being worked with rockers and pans, and claim stakes seemed to be planted clear through, from side to side. In fact, when, breathless, their eyes roving eagerly, Terry and George arrived, business-bent, it looked as though the whole ground had already been occupied by the discoverers!

"Tarryall! This isn't Tarryall—it ought to be named Grab-all!" was denouncing one of the leaders who had won the race from the last ridge. "What do you think, boys?" he addressed, as the other Gregory Gulch in-comers paused and jostled uncertainly. "There are twelve of these Tarryall fellows, and they've each of 'em staked off two thousand feet! That means twenty-four thousand feet of claims—nearly five miles! Is that fair? No! By miners' law a claim's one hundred feet."

"You're right. One hundred feet."

"Tear up those stakes."

"No thousand or two thousand foot business goes with us!"

"They've invited us in here. They've got to give us a show."

"Grab-all! Grab-all! That's the name for this camp: Grab-all!"

The murmur of responses was instant. The Gregory Gulch men surged angrily. The Tarryall men—twelve, now that the guide from Gregory Gulch had joined them—stood in a compact little group. They

were a sturdy, rough-and-ready squad, well armed and able to take care of themselves. Their spokesman, a burly, shaggy-bearded individual, stepped out a pace, and tapped the butt of his revolver significantly.

"That's tall talk, gentlemen," he said, "but it's wasted on us. This is our camp. We've discovered this ground. We came in here first, where no white men ever prospected before and where the Injuns are liable to raise our hair any moment; we've drawn our own regulations, and I reckon we're going to hold what we've got. No white men, or Injuns either, can tell us what we're to do. If you want peace you can have it; if you want a fight, you can have it; for here we are, and anybody that tries to jump a claim that we've got marked out will be making his last jump—you can bank on that. There's plenty ground left; don't you touch ours."

For a minute things looked ugly, as the Gregory Gulch crowd growled indignantly, and the Tarryall squad waited, watchful and unafraid. Then the other man spoke.

"Let's have dinner, boys. After that we'll prospect 'round and hold a little meeting, and see whether this camp is to be Tarryall or Grab-all. Tarryall is what we were invited to join, but if these fellows think we're in here to buy them out because we can't find anything else to do, they're mighty mistaken. It's a smooth scheme, but it won't work."

"We can run 'em out, all right, if they don't play fair," boasted George, as he and Terry imitated the rest of the company and prepared dinner.

"I don't know. There'd be a lot of men killed," reasoned Terry. "They were in here first, and we promised to respect their rights as locators."

"We weren't told they'd staked out all the ground, though. They're allowed only a hundred feet at a time."

"That's the Gregory Gulch rule, but this isn't Gregory Gulch; it's a different district," argued Terry, who felt that he'd rather prospect than fight. "Maybe we all can find thousand-feet claims."

"Well, we can't find 'em in Tarryall," stormed George. "And Tarryall's the place we were brought to. I guess they expect us to buy. It's a put-up job."

The meeting was held immediately after dinner. Hot speeches were made, and several resolutions were passed: one changing the name from Tarryall to "Grab-all," and another declaring that all claims should be one hundred feet. However, nobody seemed quite up to enforcing this new rule on the claims already staked. Amidst threats and bluster and glowering looks the Tarryall squad warily resumed their daily work, and gradually the Gregory Gulch crowd spread out, searching here and there for color, but taking care not to trespass.

"No fight," decided George, as if disappointed. "It's going to be just a grab-all. Get your tools if you want your pound a day."

"That's what we came for," reminded Terry, as they shouldered pick and spade apiece. "We won't wait for any fight. Come on; leave the stuff here."

"Somebody'll steal your shot-gun."

"Don't think so. I can't carry that, too! But I can put it in one of those Tarryall tents."

"I'll wear my revolver. I don't leave that," pronounced George, wagging his head.

"Sure. You ought to travel well heeled, in these parts, sonny." One of the Tarryall men had strolled over. "If you don't, that Dutchman will take your scalp."

"What Dutchman?" demanded Terry.

"He's holed up in a gulch about a mile yonder. He's like the rest of us original discoverers—what he has he's bound to keep. We all give him a clear field, and I'd advise you to do the same. It's an unhealthy neighborhood hereabouts for claim jumpers. You're two plucky lads. Any more in your party?"

"No, sir. We're our own outfit," informed Terry. "But we've got another partner, and some prospects, back in the Gregory diggin's."

"Do you know where we can dig a pound a day here? That man who brought us in said you were digging a pound a day," challenged George.

"So we are—or will be as soon as we get our lumber in place for sluices. But you newcomers won't locate any pound a day ground in this gulch. We've seen to that and we don't propose to be bullied out of our rights as discoverers. We risked our lives to come in here; but of course we'd be glad of company. We own the ground and we own the water. You fellows find your ground and your water, and all together we'll stand off the Injuns. I thought I'd warn you about the Dutchman, though—you two boys, at

any rate. I don't want to see you harmed. You were speaking about leaving your scatter-gun," he concluded, more gruffly, to Terry. "That's all right. I'll keep an eye on it for you. If you don't bother the Dutchman he won't bother you."

"He'd better not," asserted George. "I'm going to wear *my* gun. Who is he and what does he want around here?"

"Crazy, I told you. Thinks he has a strike, and maybe he has. But it's well to let a crazy man alone, and as long as he stays away from us we stay away from him. The park's big enough for that. Dutchman Diggin's, we've named his gulch. One of the boys happened in there, by accident, and was run out at the point of a shot-gun. All we see of the Dutchman is when he's hunting, and even then he's not far away from home, you bet. Now, that gulch is just beyond the second bunch of timber, south. See? And I'm warning you, friendly, because you're young."

"We'll watch out. Much obliged," promised Terry.

"Yes, but he'd better watch out, too," blustered George. "We're no tenderfeet. This gun of mine is a humdinger. He won't know it's got a wooden hammer, and it might shoot."

"Pshaw, now!" laughed the Tarryall man. "You certainly walk kind of tender-footed. But go ahead and find your pound a day."

"Guess we'll try south, just the same," said Terry, to George, as they struck off. "We can dodge the Dutchman, and there aren't many of the crowd down that way."

"Where'll we begin?" queried George, keeping pace.

"Whenever we come to a low place where there's water we'll pan for color. That's the only way," instructed Terry. "The gulches are the best places."

"Well, we'll have to locate our own diggin's pretty quick and hustle back for Harry, or we'll be all out of grub," declared George.

This search for color was fascinating work, especially when they had the field practically to themselves. There were so many likely places, one after another. Terry planned to pattern after John Gregory, and follow the color right to the source—that is, follow it when once they had found it. But to find it was the chief difficulty.

They panned faithfully clear up the first gulch, to its head—passing a few other "panners." Then they took the trail of a side draw and crossed over to another gulch and panned there. Once they thought that they had struck something, but it proved to be only a trace, and they lost even that. The country was getting wild and lonely.

"Don't suppose there are any Injuns watching, do you?" suddenly suggested George, as they were crossing a little pass that appeared to lead to still another draw or gulch.

"No." Pine and rock basked peacefully and innocent in the afternoon sunshine. "Nobody said anything about 'em. Shep would smell 'em. He hates Injuns. We'll try this next gulch and come out at the lower end, and then make tracks for camp. The sun's going to set."

They crossed over the ridge and descended.

"She looks like a good one, this time, doesn't she!" appraised George, while they strode and slid and leaped down the short slope, with Shep scouting on either hand.

"We're too high up for water, though," criticized Terry. "Can't pan without water."

The gulch was a small one, and dry. They followed along the bottom, where a stream course had worn the pebbles round and scored the soil into banks.

"I hear water," uttered Terry. "There's a stream ahead, all right."

The gulch was joined by another gulch entering at an angle—and by a stream, as well.

"Here's your good place to pan," exulted Terry. "See the gravel and the bars? Sort of an eddy. Regular pound-a-day place!"

"Yes; and somebody else has been digging, too!" growled George, disgusted. "Can't we ever discover anything?"

"They aren't digging now. Those are only gopherings. We'll get deeper. That's where the big strikes lie—down deep on bed-rock," encouraged Terry.

"Dig deep, boy," bade George.

"Dig deep, for a pound a day."

And they set to work. George's spade clinked on rock, and at blade length he carefully dumped dirt and gravel into his pan.

"Golly, I believe I see gold!" he breathed. Terry paused to await results. George panned feverishly—grew more and more excited. "Hurrah! Look-ee

here! We've struck it!" His pan, not yet fully cleared, was sparkling and yellow all over the bottom! "We've struck it!"

"We've struck it!" cheered Terry, forgetful of his own pan awaiting.

They danced. Shep barked and gamboled. And a heavy voice broke in with—

"Ja! You struck it. Maybe not! Maybe you get struck mit a club! Hold your hands up an' keep quiet until I see what kind of robbers you are dot come into my gulch."

CHAPTER XX

MILLIONS IN SIGHT

GEORGE dropped his jaw and almost dropped the pan. He and Terry stopped short in their dance, Shep growled, they all stared; stared into the muzzles of a double-barrel shot-gun projecting over the top of a big boulder not fifteen steps at one side, and also into the eyes of a man squatting concealed and squinting over the sight. He was bare-headed and tow-headed.

He slowly arose, with shot-gun leveled, and proved to be a pudgy fat man in dirty checkered shirt and faded blue overalls with bib and straps; regular barnyard overalls.

"Gee, the crazy Dutchman!" gasped George.

"Dot is one lie," corrected the man, steadily. "Joost like American boys, who haf no respect. You come into my gulch to steal mein gold und you call me 'crazy' und a 'Dootchmann,' und for dot I haf a mind to blow off your heads off. Ja!" In his anger he spoke with a stronger German accent than ever. "Vat vou want, anyhow? Where you from?"

"Oh—I know you!" exclaimed Terry, gladly. "Sure I do. And you know me. You're the Lightning Ex-

press. Remember, you sold us your sacks. I thought you'd gone home. What are *you* doing in here?"

Now the German gaped and stared. He slowly lowered his gun, and grinned widely.

"Ja, ja. Sure! You are one of dose Pike's Peak Limited boys. Ja, ja! You wass driving a mule an' a boof'lo. Ja, ja! Well, well! An' where is dot partner—dot nice young man? And who is dis odder boy? An' what you doing in my gulch—say!"

"We didn't know it was your gulch. This boy is George Stanton. He's my partner, too. My other partner's down at Denver. We've been over in the Gregory diggin's."

"An' are you prospecting alone? Dere is more of you?" demanded the German, suspiciously.

"No, we're alone," assured Terry.

"Well, well. Is dot so? Den you needn't be afraid. I would not harm goot boys. Nein, nein." Now apparently in fine humor, he waddled forward to shake hands.

"We're not afraid," replied Terry.

"I should say not," alleged George. "Your gun wasn't cocked, and we could have ducked. You'd have had to fight the two of us at once, besides the dog. That's a powerful dog. He's licked an Injun."

"Is dot so?" repeated the German, eying Shep. "I stick my one foot in his mouth an' kick him mit de odder. But no, no. Fighting is not goot. I only fight to protect my gulch. Come on down; come on down to where I lif, an' we haf supper."

"This is your dust, isn't it?" queried George, prof-

fering the pan. "It's out of that dirt. Do you own all the gulch?"

"Ja; my gulch. But nefer mind. You keep what you find. I haf plenty, plenty. Come on down now an' I show you somet'ings. You odder boy wash your pan. Den we all go."

Terry delayed not in washing his panful while he had the permission. It yielded fully as much yellow as had George's! Whew! They had struck rich pay-dirt, at last, and—shucks! It belonged to somebody else. However——

"Keep it, keep it," bade the German, with grand gesture. "It is not worth my bodder. I haf plenty. I gif you so much, but I do not want you to steal it."

So they carefully scraped the treasure into George's new buckskin sack already open. "We'll divvy," proposed George, "but let me carry it, will you?"—and accompanied the German down the main gulch.

"Ja," he explained, to Terry, "I did start myself back an' I sell you an' dot odder partner my sacks an' my tools an' my sauerkraut. An' den, when dose stages begin to pass me, an' peoples begin to come, I t'ink maybe I was one fool again, so I turn 'round."

"How did you get in here, though?" asked Terry. "Are you the first? Did anybody else come with you?"

"Ja, I am the first. No, nobody else come—joost me an' my family an' my wagon an' my oxen. People said 'the mountains, the mountains, the gold is not at Cherry Creek, it is in the mountains'; so we go into de mountains, an' we climb up an' we climb down,

an' when we get to where dere is plenty gold, we stop. Dose fellers in dot odder gulch dey come later, but I pay no attention to dem, except when one is in my gulch an' den I drive him out."

How the Lightning Express ever had managed to achieve all that "climbing up" and "climbing down" until it finally arrived here in this remote spot, Terry could not figure out—and the German seemed not to know, himself. He certainly had earned his luck. He had spoken truly, too, for now the gulch widened, and there, before, was his headquarters—a homelike camp, with the two oxen grazing, and the wagon whose torn top still displayed the legend "Litening Express," and a bough-roofed dug-out, and a clothes-line with washing waving from it, and his family hovering around the cook stove set under a tree.

"I find my cook stove an' pick him up," he announced. "Ja, we haf lots to eat, but no sauerkraut. Only deers an' boof'lo an' chickens an' fishes."

The menu sounded very alluring, the Mrs. German and all the six girls, even the youngest, smiled welcome, and the two guests were disposed to stay for the promised supper. But first their host, who seemed extraordinarily good-natured and hospitable, mysteriously beckoned them aside; led them to the wagon.

"Now I show you somet'ings," he said. "Let's get in mit us." He laboriously clambered in under the hood. They followed.

Evidently the wagon was being used as a sleeping place, for the feather tick and blankets were spread, and two red-flannel night-caps hung against the frame-

work. The German turned back the blankets and tick part way and exposed several fat gunny sacks wedged in amidst other stuff, all of which formed a floor.

"Dere!" he grunted. "Isn't it? Ja! I told you once I fill my sacks. Now I do so."

"What's in 'em?" blurted George.

"Gold. My gold."

George's eyes bulged; Terry heard him pant, and he caught his breath himself.

"In every sack?"

"Ja." One of the sacks had a rent in the upper side. The German inserted his fingers and thumb and extracting some of the contents, displayed the sample in his pudgy, calloused palm. The sample was black sand, all yellowed and asparkle with glittering grains.

"I wash him cleaner when I get time," announced the German. "First I fill all my sacks up tight. Den maybe it winter an' I must go away. My wife an' I an' two leetle girls sleep in here on top; dose odder girls sleep under; nobody get my gold. I fill my sacks in my wagon, an' some day I hitch up my oxen an' drive off alretty." He smoothed down the bed again, over the treasure. "I am a smart man. I save some sacks, dot time when I sell."

"But you've got millions!" exclaimed Terry. "I should think you'd go out instead of staying. You can't use that gold here."

"It is notting," asserted the German. "My gulch is so much gold I cannot dig him fast enough. If I go away somebody come in an' steal." He blinked at Terry with his fat eyes. "Maybe I sell, to goot boys

who would stay an' watch while I go an' come back. Den we could all work togedder."

"Sell all the gulch?"

"No, no. Maybe I sell one piece. I sell dot piece where you wash out dose pans. I haf plenty more an' I do not like to walk so far. I sell him cheap—it is notting to me, but I will not be stolen from. I sell him to goot boys for $100."

"One hundred dollars!" gasped Terry and George. They could scarcely believe their ears.

"Ja. So cheap. I will not gif him away. It is better for boys to pay a leetle somet'ings, an' when dey haf bought, den dey haf rights. One hoondred dollar—you bring in dot odder partner an' dig all you want to an' you watch my gulch, an' when I come back we all dig togedder an' get rich."

"But how much land will be ours to dig in?"

"I do not care," and the German airily waved his hand. "Dere will be t'ree of you? I sell you the right to six hoondred feet. Dot is two hoondred feet apiece. Ja. An' you watch an' don't you let anybody steal."

Terry looked at George. George was fairly purple with excitement.

"Guess we'd better take it."

"Guess we had," agreed George, gruffly.

"That's a bargain, then."

"We haven't got a hundred dollars here, though," stammered Terry, to the German. "We'll go back to Gregory Gulch right away and get it, and get our partner, and we'll hustle in here."

"Dot's all right," agreed the German. "Dot's all right. You are goot boys. I wait. I haf one sack not yet full alretty."

"We won't stay for supper," proclaimed Terry. "We'll hustle. It's nearly dark, anyway. Come on, George!"

He piled out. George piled out. The German rather tumbled out. They grabbed their tools. "Goot-bye, goot-bye," answered the German, and in a moment they were hurrying down the gulch.

"We'll sell the Gregory claims," panted Terry. "Sell to Ike. That's where we'll get the hundred dollars."

"Sure," panted George. "Talk about your pound a day! We'll make more than that in here."

"I should say! Reckon we washed out ten dollars in just those two pans."

"And there'll be millions!"

"That German has a million now!"

"Wait till we tell Harry about the sacks."

"Not a word of this to those Tarryall and Grab-all folks. Keep mum!"

"You bet. Don't want any stampede. We'll pretend we're going out disgusted."

"Wonder if the German expects us to stay in all winter?"

"We don't care. We can build a cabin and kill buffalo and deer."

"And pile up the sand and wash cleaner after the snow comes."

"Shall we start tonight? Ought to be making tracks."

"N-no," said Terry. "It'll be dark before we can pack up. Shucks!"

For the sun had set early behind the high peaks and already the dusk was creeping into the hollows.

"We'll start first thing in the morning, then," declared George. "Hurrah! We've struck it, haven't we?"

"That's so." The fact was so stupendous that Terry felt almost frightened over the great good fortune.

"Two days there and two days back again."

"He said he'd wait. He's got a sack to fill."

"Hope we don't talk in our sleep," babbled George.

"If we don't, nobody'll guess we're rich. We mustn't go grinning 'round, just the same," babbled Terry.

"No. We'll act mad, like the rest."

And so, this evening, they were careful to appear very solemn. But of course the night was a difficult one for sleep, when a fellow's brain thronged with golden secrets.

And as early as they two were in their morning start for Gregory Gulch, others were as early. This camp of Grab-all was largely a disgruntled camp. There was no lumber on hand for sluices, the conveniently worked ground had already been taken up by the Tarryall men, most of the newcomers were short on provisions, nobody knew but that winter would set in before many weeks; and so everybody from Gregory was planning to leave as soon as he had located a claim.

In fact, when Jenny finally was packed, and in the pink dawn unwillingly stepped forth at the bidding of

"Gwan! Hep, now!" from Terry and a slap on the flank from George, half a dozen outfits were heading up the trail.

Urged to make the most of her long legs, Jenny pressed after.

"You boys are in more of a hurry to get out than you were to get in, seems to me," challenged one party whom they passed. "Must have heard of a new strike, eh?"

"Yes, sir-ee!" affirmed Terry, daringly. He had to say that much, or he'd burst, but of course the man did not believe him.

They made the trip in best time, and arrived at Gregory Gulch soon after sun-up of the third morning.

CHAPTER XXI

TERRY MAKES A DEAL

EVEN in the short time that they had been absent the Gulch had improved—for now on Gregory Point stood the preacher's church. However, they might not stop to congratulate him and to explain why they had not helped. All this fuss and furor in Gregory diggin's seemed small business to anybody who knew just where not merely one pound a day but several pounds a day were to be made easy.

"If Harry hasn't come we'll sell to the Ike crowd, anyway," declared Terry.

"He told us to—he said we might, if we needed it. Then one of us can rustle back to that other gulch and the other can stay for Harry," planned George.

"Somebody's there, all right. The chimney's smoking."

"Must be Harry getting breakfast."

"Jiminy Christmas, though!" cried Terry, as now they neared the cabin. "What's going on? Looks as if he'd brought in my dad and your dad, and they're working the claims!"

Sure enough: the sluice had been moved and slanted in another direction, water was pouring from

the lower end again, and two figures were busy beside it, with spade and pick.

"Well, they won't want to work it long, when they know what we know," vaunted George.

The two figures were engaged across from the cabin, shoveling and pecking, stooped over, and apparently did not notice the Jenny outfit. So the home-comers aimed straight for the cabin, and were just about to whoop to surprise Harry, when Harry stepped out. But no, not Harry!

It was Pine Knot Ike! He emptied a dish-pan of water, and surveyed Terry, George, Jenny and Shep. They stopped short and surveyed him.

"Say! What are you doing in that cabin?" accused Terry, so much astounded that his voice cracked on him.

"Those aren't our dads, either, over there," whispered George.

"I air livin' hyar, I reckon, but 'tain't your cabin," replied Ike, calmly, and chewing his tobacco.

"I'd like to know why it isn't our cabin, and our land, too!" retorted Terry.

" 'Cause you moved off an' we moved on. When one party doesn't develop a prospect, an' doesn't record it, an' quits, an' another party takes it up an' perceeds to develop, I reckon fust party loses out," drawled Ike.

"But it is recorded. We recorded it before we left. And the only reason we didn't develop it was because you took our water," furiously answered Terry. "And we didn't move off. We went away for a day or two, that is all."

"That's right," blustered George. "I heard him tell the recorder. And you'd better move off, yourselves, or we'll have you put off!"

Pine Knot Ike squirted a prodigious stream of filthy tobacco juice.

"Waal, now, the books don't show," he asserted. "We're hyar, with our improvements, workin' a claim that looked to be abandoned, an' I reckon that'll count. We take our water off an' what's your prospect wuth to you, anyhow?"

"He's a big bully," whispered George.

"We want to sell, though," reminded Terry. Ike seemed to be giving them the opportunity. So—"It's worth more than nothing, just the same," he replied. "That's our cabin and our sluice and our ground. You needn't think you can come over and jump things this way. We've got plenty of friends right in this gulch, and down at Denver, too."

"Reckon that sort o' talk doesn't amount to much. Possession air nine points o' the law, young feller," sneered Ike. "I air a man o' peace, but when anybody says 'fight,' I can riz on my hind legs as quick as ary b'ar."

"You won't amount to much, either," accused Terry, with sudden thought, "after I tell people how you got that Injun head and how you shot your own barrel full of holes, and how you skedaddled out of that tent in Auraria and how Harry made you dance at Manhattan last summer!"

Pine Knot Ike stared and glared and ruminated.

"Mebbe you know somethin' an' mebbe you don't,"

he admitted. "But I air a man o' peace an' so air my pardners. To save hard feelin's, an' argufyin', how'll you sell what you call your rights in this hyar property, dust paid down on the spot?"

"We'll sell for a hundred dollars," offered Terry.

"Whar's your pardner—that lame feller?"

"He'll be here; but he told me I could sell. Didn't he, George?"

"Yes, he did. I heard him. He said to sell if we wanted to," confirmed George.

"Whoop-ee!" summoned Ike, to the two men at the sluice. They dropped their tools and crossed over. One was the giant, before encountered. With an occasional side glance at George and Terry, they and Ike consulted together in low tones for a minute or so. Ike disappeared into the cabin, came out and, advancing a few steps, tossed a limp buckskin bag at Terry.

"Thar's your hundred dollars in dust," he said, "'cordin' to agreement. You stick your name an' your pardner's on a bill o' sale, an' that other boy'll be witness, an' no hard feelin's."

"How do we know this is $100?" challenged Terry, suspicious, and resolved upon being businesslike. One hundred dollars they had to have. But what luck!

"Take it to some scales and weigh it, and have it certified to, fust, then," rapped the giant. "You won't find us gone when you come back. We're hyar to stay."

That sounded like a fair proposition.

"We can get it weighed at a store," prompted Terry to George. "Come on."

"Quick work, boy!" praised George, as with Shep and with Jenny (who had been waiting to be unpacked) faithfully shambling after, they hastened for the nearest store. "One of us can skip out with it for Dutchman's Gulch and close our deal there, and the other can stay for Harry. Wish he'd turn up."

"There he is now! See? Good!"

"Where? He sure is! Riding horseback! And my dad and your dad and Virgie and Duke! He's got Duke!"

"Yes, and Sol! That other man's Sol Judy!" cried Terry, rejoicing. "They've all come in! Bully for them! We can all go to Dutchman's Gulch—work our claim and find others—just pile up the dust! Hi-oh! Hurrah!"

They shouted and waved, and cut down farther into the gulch to head off Harry's party, now filing up as if for the cabin.

"Hello!"

"Hello yourselves!"

"Hello, Dad! Hello, Sol!"

There was a great shaking of hands all around.

"Where you going? How's Duke? Hello, Duke!"

"Going to our mines, of course," answered Mr. Stanton.

"Where are *you* going?" demanded Harry. "What's Jenny packed for?"

"We're going out," informed George. "We've made the biggest strike you ever heard of—pounds a day—in another place, and we've bought tons of pay dirt for only $100, and we've sold the Golden Prize to the

Ike crowd, and we're going to that other place just as quick as we can get there, and so are you, all of you, too!"

"Sold that other property? What for?" chorused the men.

"To pay for the new one. We hustled back on purpose. Just got in, and now all we have to do is weigh Ike's dust to make sure he isn't cheating us, and give him a bill of sale, and then we'll show you the other place. George and Harry and I have six hundred feet already, but there'll be more, and anyway we can all work," bubbled Terry.

"How do you know what's in those other diggin's?" queried Sol.

"Because we saw it! We washed out over ten dollars in two pans, and the German we bought from has *sacks full!*" proclaimed George. "Regular sacks full!"

"He's the Lightning Express German," added Terry. "Harry knows him. He's there all by himself. He wants us to watch his diggin's while he takes his gold out and comes back. That's why he sold so cheap."

"Great Cæsar!" murmured Harry. "Sacks full? Thought we'd bought all his sacks and he'd turned home?"

"So he had, but he changed his mind. And he's struck it rich, rich!"

"Where are those new diggin's? Have you got any of the dust with you that you say you washed out?" invited Sol.

"They're over near Tarryall or Grab-all, in the

South Park; only about fifty miles," answered Terry.

"And here's our dust, too," proffered George.

Sol opened the little sack and fingered the contents.

"Gold!" he snorted. "Yes, fool's gold. That's nothing but iron pyrites—'tisn't worth a cent a ton! Don't you know the difference between gold and iron pyrites yet? Thought you were miners."

"But it's from the German's diggin's," stammered Terry—for George appeared staggered out of his wits. "He said it was gold and he's got sacks full, right in his wagon."

Sol laughed.

"Sacks full, eh? Did anybody ever see gold dust by the gunny sack full? He's the same crazy German who was washing fool's gold from the Platte, I reckon —thought he had the real stuff and wouldn't believe otherwise. I met him, myself, when he was traveling on in for fear somebody'd rob him."

"Oh!" groaned George. "We thought——"

"Have you closed the sale of that property yonder? Haven't given a transfer yet, have you?" sharply demanded Terry's father.

"N-no; we've got the money, though. We were going to weigh it. They're waiting—they're there, working."

"Who?"

"Ike and two other men. We found 'em there when we came back."

"By ginger! Jumped it, did they?" ejaculated Sol. "Looks like we were just in time." He spurred on, Harry after.

"You boys don't go a step farther," ordered Mr. Richards. "You come along with us. Lucky you didn't give any bill of sale, or we might have serious trouble."

"But Harry told us we might sell," faltered Terry.

"Harry didn't know, either. Why, there are thousands of dollars in those claims, according to Sol. The Ike crowd know, all right. Where you're to blame is for having gone off on a wild-gose chase and left the claims and then been bamboozled by such nonsense as sacks full of iron pyrites. Gold dust is soft and dull; pyrites are hard and bright."

"What makes you think the Golden Prize is so rich, though?" stammered Terry, as he and George tried to keep up with the horses.

"The Golden Prize is liable to be a fortune, but we're banking on that other claim, the one you gave to Virgie. She happened to show Sol the piece of rock she brought down, and he says it's the best kind of gold quartz—fairly oozing."

"And not float, either. It's from a surface lode close at hand," put in Mr. Stanton.

"Aw, shucks!" sheepishly said Terry to George. "Guess we weren't so smart as we thought we were. Now Pine Knot Ike's there and maybe we can't get him off."

"Well, he may assert you abandoned the claims, but Sol knows all the mining laws and we've got right on our side," consoled his father.

When they arrived at the spot, Sol and the Pine Knot Ike party were hotly arguing.

CHAPTER XXII

THE "VIRGINIA CONSOLIDATED"

"ACCORDING to miners' law of this gulch or any other district," was declaring Sol, "when a party can't work a lode claim by reason of lack of water or proper machinery, they've a right to let it lie a certain length of time; can go out, and come back to it again, in the meanwhile."

"Yes, mebbe so," returned the giant. "But they got to give their intentions to the recorder, an' there ain't any such intentions on file."

"There are, too—or there ought to be," contradicted Terry, freshly excited. "I told the recorder myself—didn't I, George? I told him what was the matter, and that we were going away, and I told him to record the claims, and he said he would till we got back."

"Oh, you did, did you!" rasped the giant. "That'll do for talk, but whar's the proof?"

"When did you see the recorder, Terry?" asked his father.

"The very night before we left. He said the books were locked up, but he'd remember."

"Sure he was the recorder?"

"Of course he was. He'd just been elected. He's

the 'Root Hog or Die' professor. I know him and so does Harry."

"That's the man!" exclaimed Harry. "I'll go and get him." And away sped Harry.

"Furthermore and besides and notwithstanding, we've regularly bought this hyar property, and thar's the witness to the transaction," continued the giant, pointing to George. "We paid the price and it's been accepted, and when money has changed hands, that settles things."

Attracted by the dispute, other gulch people had begun to gather.

"That's right," pronounced two or three.

Terry felt his heart sink. Had he made a botch of the matter, with his hurry? George also was frightened, for he had paled.

"What property do you think you've bought, then?" demanded Sol.

"Everything: cabin and sluice and all. And you can't touch 'em."

"Where's the bill of sale?"

"We don't need any bill o' sale to put us in possession. We've paid the money, an' hyar we air," replied Pine Knot Ike. "An' we're bad when we're riled. Nothin' riles us like bein' robbed, an' thar's nobody as bad as a man o' peace when once he's riled, stranger."

"But you couldn't buy that True Blue prospect," rapped Sol.

"Why not? We took what was offered. The two claims go together. Nothin' was said different."

"Why not? Because the Golden Prize and the True Blue aren't owned by the same party; that's why. The True Blue's the property of this girl here—has been transferred to her in due legal form, and her father holds it in trust for her, and these boys couldn't have sold it if they'd wanted to!"

"It *is* mine," piped Virgie. "It's been given to me and it's written down and those mean men sha'n't touch it. They're getting it all wet!"

"Whar are your papers an' whar are your witnesses?" challenged the giant.

"There's one witness," and Mr. Stanton pointed at George. "You heard the words when the claim was given to Virgie, didn't you?" he asked.

"Yes, I did," affirmed George.

"And that other boy was one of the owners who agreed, and here comes the second former owner who signed the transfer for both."

"Down at Denver, before a notary public," panted Harry, arriving with the "Root Hog or Die" professor. "And it's been recorded."

"That is true," nodded the "Root Hog or Die" professor. "And I do acknowledge that I was asked to record this other claim also, and that I was told of the intentions and reasons when it was temporarily left unoccupied. I am responsible for there being no official memorandum, but I entirely forgot. However, the verbal agreement is sufficient. I remember perfectly."

"That remains to be seen," growled the giant—who seemed to be the spokesman for the Pine Knot Ike

"YOU DARE TO LAY HAND ON THIS OR INTERFERE IN ANY WAY AND I'll SHOW YOU WHAT A CALIFORNY FORTY-NINER KNOWS ABOUT PROTECTING PROPERTY"

party. "As for that other prospect, we don't fight gals. It's a dry claim, anyhow; hasn't any water of its own an' never will have. As for this claim we're standin' on, we'll keep it. It's been duly bought, paid for, an' it's workable, an' that's enough. Ain't I right, boys?" he appealed to the gathering crowd. "When money's passed an' accepted, that binds the sale."

The crowd shifted and murmured. Plainly, they were not very approving of the Pine Knot Ike party methods, but they had a strong sense of legal rights.

"'Pears like it was a deal in good faith," remarked somebody.

"You claim that cabin and everything in it, do you?" inquired Sol.

"Yes, sir! Everything on this hyar ground—fixtures an' improvements, an' don't you touch a finger to 'em," boomed the giant. "You an' your gal have got that dry prospect. Go over an' mine. Mebbe you can mine an' mebbe you can't, for you'll be drier'n ever as soon as we move that sluice to whar it belongs."

"Haw, haw!" gibed Ike and the other man. "You can wait for a dew."

"No! You can wait for that sluice!" retorted Sol. He spurred his horse and in a jiffy was beside it. "You dare to lay hand on this or interfere in any way and I'll show you what a Californy Forty-niner knows about protecting property."

"Ain't that our sluice?"

"Not an inch, now. You claim the cabin and all

improvements on that other prospect—we claim the sluice and all improvements on this prospect. I reckon what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. This sluice is all on the True Blue ground."

"Hooray!" cheered the willing crowd.

"You'll have a sluice without water. Mebbe that's how they mine in Californy!" jeered Pine Knot Ike. "That thar water's ourn as soon as it comes down the leetle draw ag'in. So we'll jest natterly turn it off on you."

"Not by a jugful!" objected Sol. "That girl's filed on her water rights in this little draw, when her claim was recorded." He ran rapid eye along the Golden Prize surface. "And I reckon there doesn't any water go with that other prospect, anyhow! I've an idee the hundred feet ends short of the water."

"So have I," asserted Harry. "Give me room, gentlemen. Just to prove that my notion's correct I'll measure. That claim was only stepped off, in the beginning."

Harry fished a surveyor's tape from his pocket (evidently he had come prepared) and from the first claim stake, near the cabin, measured the length of the Golden Prize ground. The one hundred feet ended three yards away from the little stream course!

"The two properties join, so that puts the natural water on the True Blue ground," triumphantly proclaimed Sol.

"Mebbe, when thar is water; but thar won't be any after we've started to use again on our other workin's up at the head," retorted the giant.

"You tried that once, but you can't do it a second time. We've filed our rights on the water coming down this draw, and here it is, and by miners' law we're entitled to our share."

"So are we, then, by thunder!" shouted the giant. "As long as there's water flowin' past, we're goin' to have some of it. That's miners' law, too. We can ditch some of it over——"

"No, you can't!" A new voice struck in, and a new figure appeared. Archie Smith! He held his side and panted for breath.

"What *you* got to do with it? Why can't we?"

"Because you couldn't have bought this claim even if you paid over the money. Do you want to sell? Do you want them for neighbors?" demanded Archie of Harry.

"We should say not!"

"Well, then," resumed Archie, panting, and addressing the Pine Knot Ike party, "you didn't buy the Golden Prize, because you couldn't. The boys didn't own it. They wouldn't take it from me; they said they'd work it while I was gone, and now I'm back and I won't sell—to *you.* And I order you to get off."

Terry looked blankly at Harry, Harry smiled at Terry.

"That's so." And it was so, now that they thought.

"B' gorry, the same thing happened to me," announced the voice of Pat Casey, "an' Oi lost me diggin's. Sure, it doesn't seem fair play—though Oi'm a friend to the boys."

"It is fair play, in this case," asserted Sol. "You see, gentlemen," he said to the crowd, "these two boys, Harry and Terry, came in here and proceeded to work this ground. They had the water and they hustled to put in a sluice, and were beginning to wash out pay dirt, when those mean whelps, suspecting these prospects were richer than they looked to be, turned off the water to which this ground naturally was entitled—just hogged it, made the waste run the other way, to render these claims useless so they might either be jumped or bought for a song. The same whelps sneaked around, prospecting, until they located some of the richest gold quartz you ever laid your eyes on; then they told the boys the ground was no good, anyway—mostly pockets and barren bed-rock, had no water, and all that sort of thing—and tried to get 'em to move, for $100. But the boys stuck, so as to pay off a debt. One of them sold pies and the other worked for a dollar and a half a day. Then, while they were temporarily absent, these whelps jumped both claims—and look at the rock they've already taken out!"

"B' gorry, they ought to be hanged!" declared Pat Casey. "The lads are honest lads, Oi'll say that for 'em. An' if somebody'll fetch a rope——"

"No, no, gentlemen," appealed Sol, as the crowd began to surge angrily. "When the dirty deal was started there was no law in the camp; but you have laws now, and if those fellows want to fight we'll fight them with law. But they're licked, and they know it."

"Waal," conceded Pine Knot Ike, "if we're licked I reckon we're licked, an' no hard feelin's. We air men o' peace. We bought this hyar property in good faith, but bein' as the other party ain't satisfied we'll take our hundred dollars in dust an' move off."

"Where's their dust, Terry?" asked Harry.

"Hold on a bit," objected Mr. Richards. "Hold on! How much gold have they taken out already, since they jumped these prospects? They've been running that sluice for at least a couple of days."

"We'll leave you that thar pile o' sluice tailin's; it's too coarse for washin'," replied the giant. "And thar's a clean-up waitin', in the sluice. But you got to give us back the hundred dollars' purchase price, an' do it mighty quick."

"Don't rile us," warned Ike.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Ike," spoke Harry. "We'll be fair. I'll wrestle you for that $100. If you throw me, you can have it, and if I throw you we can keep it. You've already got more than that out of this ground—but we want to be fair."

"Don't you do it, Harry!" protested Father Richards. "There's no need of such foolishness."

"That's what I say," added Mr. Stanton. "We won't allow it."

"I know what I'm about," replied Harry, with a wink at Terry and George and the breathless Archie.

"Young feller," solemnly said Ike, "I ekcept, ketch as ketch can, but keep back your dog. I air a tough proposition in a wrestle, but I don't aim to come to grips with man and dog at the same time."

Harry alertly threw aside his hat and stepped forward; Ike did the like.

"David an' Goliath!" cheered the crowd; and indeed the match did resemble that, with Harry so slight and slim and the shaggy Ike appearing to be a foot taller and a foot broader.

"Has he any show? Do you think he *can* throw him?" whispered Archie—referring, of course, to Harry.

"Sure he can," asserted Terry. "Can't he, George?"

"He usually does what he sets out to do," agreed George.

Now, arms half out-stretched and shoulders forward, Harry and Ike were circling each other, in watchful, eager fashion. Ike rushed—"Look out, Harry!"—but Harry dodged. Ike rushed again; this time, quick as light, Harry darted to meet him, and they were locked—locked with arms and legs, while they tugged and swayed and Ike grunted, and their boots crunched upon the rocks and gravel.

"Harry's got the under hold!" gasped Terry.

"Yes, but Ike'll break him in two!" gasped George.

Virgie was crying and calling, Shep was barking, the spectators were shouting all sorts of advice. And swallowed in Ike's great arms, Harry seemed quite helpless, simply clinging to Ike's waist, with his face pressed against Ike's shirt, and letting Ike dash him hither-thither, trying to upset him.

But somehow, Harry always landed on his feet. Once he was lifted clear in air—only to come down again with a thump. Twice he was lifted—this time

actually by the seat of the trousers! Ike tried to pull him in and bend him backwards, but Harry stiffened and bowed his back. Then suddenly he did come in—but lightning fast, he side-stepped a little, thrust himself part way past Ike, stopped farther, and, shifting his grip to Ike's thighs, tilted and heaved.

Up rose Ike, pawing and kicking—up, a foot off the ground, and over Harry he shot, almost horizontal, like a diver from a spring-board, to plough the ground beyond with his shoulder.

"Ah!"

"Ah!"

"That war a trick!" scolded Ike, sitting up and rubbing his tousled head.

"All right," answered Harry, panting and laughing. "We'll make it two falls out of three, then. I've a couple more tricks."

"No, young feller," grumbled Ike, still rubbing his head. "I can wrestle a b'ar, but I ain't built for wrestlin' ary combination of eel an' alligator tail. If you're a school-master, what'll you take to teach me that holt?"

"That's not for sale, either," laughed Harry. "But here's your sack of dust. We don't want it, after all." Thus saying, he tossed over the buckskin sack, and limped to get his hat from Terry.

So the result was that the Pine Knot Ike party left good-naturedly, and the crowd dispersed good-naturedly, and the Golden Prize and the True Blue claims remained in undisputed possession of the victors; all of which was better than threats of further row.

Harry shook hands with Archie. It was his first opportunity.

"Have you come back to stay? Hope so. It's your mine, you know—and it's going to be a rich one; richer than you ever imagined, if that vein from the True Blue extends through. We'll help you work it while we're working the True Blue, but the True Blue's enough for us."

"I don't care. It's yours, just the same. I gave it to you once and I give it to you again," insisted Archie. "This time I'll make out a regular transfer. I'm here just for a little visit, and then I'm going back East to stay a while."

"Where'd you find Sol, Harry?" asked George.

"Down in Denver and Auraria. While I was dickering for Duke he turned up. He'd been at Pike's Peak, and everywhere else. He turned up just in time."

"Isn't Mother coming? Don't I see Mother?" queried Terry of his father.

"We may send for her and George's mother after we get things straightened out here. But you'll see her in Denver, anyway. You and Harry'll have to go down there for some clothes pretty soon. She wants to see *you* mighty bad."

"Is this rock gold rock? Doesn't look so. How do you know?"

"Sol says it is. Some of it, I mean. He knew as soon as he saw that piece Virgie brought down. And we're lucky that he's with us. He's an expert."

Sol had been tramping about with a spade, scraping

here and there on both claims, and examining. He joined the group.

"There's considerable rotten quartz that can be sluiced, and probably some loose dirt to be washed; but there's a thundering fine vein or lode running right across. The best surface showing is on the True Blue, where that piece of rock came from, but I reckon that when we get down into what those fellows pretended was the bed-rock on the Golden Prize we'll find it just as rich. So part of us can be sluicing, while the rest of us rig some sort of a contrivance to crush the quartz and wash it with mercury, till a regular quartz mill is 'stablished near us." And Sol continued, using words and terms that only the men understood.

"Shucks!" acknowledged Terry. "We were looking for dirt; we didn't count the rock." So he turned to George, who was lifting Virgie from her pony.

"You did it, Virgie, with your piece of quartz. Now you're going to be rich."

"I don't want to be rich all alone," objected Virgie. "I don't want to be any richer than you or George or Harry or Sol or—or anybody of us."

She looked as if she were about to weep over it!

"Of course not, Virgie," called Harry. "You won't have to be rich all alone. That's a miserable state. But you can share with your father and Sol, and Terry and Father Richards and I have a mine, too, you know; and just to make sure that nobody'll be any richer than anybody else in the crowd, we'll all join together and we'll name the company the Virginia Consolidated!"

THE END

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